

Encyclopaedia of Nationalism

Athena S. Leoussi
editor

Anthony D. Smith consultant advisor



Transaction Publishers
New Brunswick (U.S.A.) and London (U.K.)

Instrumentalist Theories of Nationalism

nians. The European Community, for which Estonia is a leading candidate, has exerted pressure to secure citizenship for most of the Russians there, regardless of the circumstances of their arrival. In contrast to most other nations, Estonia can claim to be restoring a society unjustly incorporated in the Soviet Union under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. While avoiding precipitate actions like expulsion, Estonian nationalists argue that secure control of the institutions of their small country is the only guarantee for preserving a culture that has demonstrated its ability to foster economic standards far superior to the nearby Slavic countries. A similar argument was persuasive as a justification for Slovenia's insistence (1991) on separation from Yugoslavia.

Even when they are couched in theoretical terms, the sharply contending views just summarized really rest on ethical or legal principles. Moreover, even a cursory historical review indicates that contenders' actions often contradict their principles. Under the circumstances, clear-cut preference for either "theoretical" position would be misplaced. Instead, one may suggest that wise statecraft should at times prefer primarily pragmatic solutions concerning self-determination, taking into account considerations that far transcend the particular nationalist situations at issue.

Bibliography

- Ancel, Jacques. 1936. *Géopolitique*. Paris: Delagrave.
- Armstrong, John A. 1990. "Contemporary ethnicity: the moral dimension in comparative perspective." *Review of Politics* 52, 2: 163-88.
- Dorpalen, Andreas. 1948. *The World of General Haushofer: Geopolitics in Action*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart.
- Maresca, John J. 1985. *To Helsinki: The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1973-1975*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ronen, Dov. 1979. *The Quest for Self-Determination*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Smith, Anthony D. 1986. "History and liberty: dilemmas of loyalty in Western democracies." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 9, 1: 43-65.

Van Dyke, Vernon. 1965. *Human Rights, Ethnicity, and Discrimination*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

John A. Armstrong

Instrumentalist Theories of Nationalism

In philosophy instrumentalism is the doctrine that scientific theories are not true descriptions of an unobservable reality but simply useful instruments which enable us to structure and interpret the observable world. In the social sciences, similarly, instrumentalism is the doctrine that ideas can primarily be explained by their uses for their beneficiaries, rather than by their accurate representation of truth or reality. So, in our field, instrumental theories explain both the genesis and maintenance of nationalism by the interests it is alleged to serve. They represent a sharp contrast to other explanatory theories which focus on the identities and ideas that nationalism expresses, protects, or represents.

Instrumentalist theories of nationalism are trivially true in one respect: no political phenomenon is likely to survive indefinitely if it is entirely useless to all conceivable human collectivities or individuals. However, most instrumentalist theories extrapolate well beyond this safe and uninteresting claim. They tend to become reductionist or simply false. They share an entertaining and at times a biting, debunking, flavor that seeks to expose the vested interests behind nationalism. They are, therefore, the favored theories of anti-nationalists. Instrumentalist theories of nationalism presently come in three packages, each of which is generally lacking in respect for the others. They are the sociobiological, the sociological and the individualist. The SOCIOBIOLOGICAL THEORY is well represented in the work of Pierre van den Berghe (1987). In sociobiology nationalism is a form of ethnic identification, a group-interest motivated belief, similar to xenophobia. Nations are extended families, really so, or imagined as such (in an important qualification); and people are said to be naturally disposed towards ethnic nepotism, selection in favor of their own kin.

Instrumentalist Theories of Nationalism

Sociobiologists tend to debunk what nationalists say about their own nation or nationalism. For example, they interpret allegedly altruistic nationalist behavior, such as sacrificing oneself for one's nation, as driven, at some deeper level, by the imperatives of reproductive success. Or, they diagnose the language of "kin" and "kinship" regularly invoked by nationalists, as direct evidence for their theses. Their political vision is bleakly "realistic." Most sociobiologists generally adhere to what Steinberg (1981) has dubbed the "iron law of ethnicity," namely the belief that where there is group difference, especially difference based on kin, there will be ethnic conflict. Ethnocentrism, prejudice, and national and ethnic conflict are seen as natural outcomes of conflicts of group interest, deriving from kinship identity and belonging, part of the competitive world of nature.

There are many problems with sociobiological instrumentalism (for a general critical overview of sociobiology see Kitcher 1985). Critics focus on three. First, in so far as sociobiological instrumentalism relies on interests to do explanatory work it is interests at the subhuman level, amongst genes and more mysterious "gene pools." Here rational choice instrumentalists part company with their sociobiological cousins, maintaining that only individuals can have interests, even if genes can be modelled as having interests. Pop sociobiology, in any case, fails to demonstrate linkages between any given and presumably unmodifiable "nationalist" gene(s) and any nationalist behavioral trait(s). Sophisticated sociobiologists, by contrast, do not make the error of linking any specific gene with nationalist phenomena. They see their task to be that of disclosing the functional significance, defined by reproductive success, of nationalist behavioral traits or of nationalist cultural and political organizations. They have not had much success in persuading their colleagues in the social sciences of the merits of their insights. Second, while sociobiological instrumentalism may provide an (arguably) convincing account of (some of) the interests at stake in a lineage group, it is not obvious that this account can be successfully extrapolated to "the nation," a much higher or at least larger level of group-aggregation in which any

sense of hereditary kinship is, as sociobiologists concede, much more imagined. Third, critics maintain that while the sociobiological approach may be evolutionary, it is ahistorical. Whatever traits we have inherited from our early ancestors in savannah environments could not have been nationalist ones. Our stone-age ancestors, foragers and hunters, were not nationalists because without states there can be no nations. Modernists insist that nationalism is only coherently defined as a political doctrine—one that affirms the legitimacy of national self-determination, and maintains that nations should be the rightful cultural boundaries for state formation or organization (e.g., Gellner 1983; O'Leary 1997). Nationalist doctrine, in other words, is only conceivable after the formation of states; and only likely to be widespread in the post-caste conditions of modern industrialized and communication-intensive societies. All that sociobiologists do is to provide a bare account of why humans might have evolved group-interested identifications and behaviors; what they cannot convincingly do is to explain why these have taken a nationalist form in modern conditions. Their political vision has also been contested by egalitarian pluralists: for example Steinberg (1981) correctly maintains that the connection between ethnic and kin difference and conflict is not as inevitable as sociobiologists suppose: "If there is an iron law of ethnicity, it is that when ethnic groups are found in a hierarchy of power, wealth, and status, then conflict is inescapable... where there is social, economic, and political parity ... ethnic conflict, when it occurs, tends to be at a low level and rarely spills over into violence."

Sociological instrumentalism comes in two principal varieties: from Marxists and elite theorists. They share the view that nationalism, like several other belief systems, doctrines, and ideologies, is used and abused primarily by ruling classes or power elites, and, by rival or aspirant ruling classes and power elites. Their perspective is like that of Voltaire's on religion: a supersubstitution, which serves the interests of its propagators. No enlightened person, they believe, could be a nationalist because, in Eric Hobsbawm's view, it requires too many beliefs in what is not so (1990).

Instrumentalist Theories of Nationalism

One school of elite theorists suggests that elites use and abuse the identities and ideas of the masses on behalf of, and because of, the interests of elites, especially through the "invention of traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Paul Brass's work on India is an exemplary illustration of this school of thought paying especial attention to political elitism choices of linguistic and cultural markers to build political coalitions in favor of territorial autonomy or employment preferences (Brass 1991). Brass's work is sophisticated, but does not deal with two matters satisfactorily: why and when elites choose ethnic or national identities for mobilization rather than other identities, for example, class or religious identities, and whether elites are constrained either by their national and ethnic formation, or that of their followers. Brass's position must be differentiated from an even stronger brand of elite theory which holds that elites both construct and then use and abuse the national identities and "ideas" of the masses—whose identities and ideas are therefore plainly inauthentic, and whose cognitive capacities are thereby seen as seriously challenged. Although the expression "false consciousness" is rarely heard these days it is plainly signalled in this pattern of thought. It is difficult to convict real academics of displaying this argument but it is the principal burden of John Breuilly's (1985), and of Eric Hobsbawm's work (1990). It must be noted, however, that, although Hobsbawm follows Ernest Gellner, nevertheless, he seeks to explain why ethno-national identities might have appeals rooted in the life-experiences rather than the vulgar interests of what he scornfully calls the "lesser examination passing" classes.

Elite theorists and Marxists jointly recognize that the interests pursued by nationalists only make sense in modern conditions (Hechter 1975; Schwartzmantel 1992). For elite theorists the modern state, with its extensive surveillance, regulatory and policy-making capacities, is the chief object of political mobilization because it is rationally perceived as a site of power and opportunities. Nationalism's social power derives from the ability of motivated elites to use cultural appeals to cloak their ambitions to capture state power or a share of state resources. For Marxists, by contrast, the power of nationalism is ultimately

rooted in the capitalist economy and the interests to which it gives rise.

Instrumentalist Marxists portray the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie, in particular, as likely carriers of nationalist ideologies because nationalism successfully masks their class interests as universal interests, and because they have much to lose from the erosion of local cultures—allegedly unlike the proletariat. The historical account that Marxists give is simple enough: the bourgeoisie invite the masses as co-nationals to defeat the aristocracy, and thereby prize open the state apparatus to bourgeois as opposed to landed interests; and, subsequently, through the state apparatus, they promote the development of integrated national markets based around a common national language, or culture from which they benefit. In neo-Marxist argument nationalism in advanced countries is seen as a response to uneven economic development (Nairn 1977) or internal colonialism (Hechter 1975) on the part of a coalition of classes led by an aspirant national bourgeoisie. In this respect, Marxist thinking still owes much to Lenin's and Trotsky's portrayal of national liberation movements in the third world as cross-class coalitions organized against the imperialism of the metropolitan centres of advanced capitalism.

There are at least four core difficulties with both Marxists' and elite theorists' instrumental accounts of nationalism. The first is that elites and dominant classes, as much as the masses or subordinate classes are constrained by their ethno-national identities—and not just motivated by their interests. Although these identities themselves may be capable of slow and occasionally sudden shifts, it is not easy to restructure one's linguistic or cultural identity even when it is in one's interests narrowly conceived. In different ways and with different methodologies this argument is made by Walker Connor (1994), Donald Horowitz (1985), and by Anthony D. Smith (1986). The second is that it is difficult to dispute that the masses or subordinate classes have both genuine interests as well as their own identities at stake in "their nations," so that instrumentalists are wrong to see nationalism largely as a manipulative discourse imposed from on high, and oddly insensitive to

Instrumentalist Theories of Nationalism

the interests of those lower in social hierarchies—which they see as entirely saturated with wishful or foolish thinking. Mass hysteria and mass stupidity are, of course, regular features of human history, but working classes and petty bourgeois are not irrational or hysterical to support nationalist programs that offer them citizenship or better prospects of social mobility for their children. The third is that like all interest-based accounts in the social sciences such instrumentalist reasoning gives insufficient weight to the independent impact of ideas and doctrines in persuading people of what is right, independently of what their particular interests are, and without which they might have no recognizable sense of what their interests were. Lastly, these accounts reduce identities to interests. This is arguably a philosophical category mistake which conflates what people want to be with what they want (Ringmar 1996).

Marxists, of course, have separate difficulties all of their own (Connor 1984), to which most of them now are acutely sensitized (Moore 1975; Nimni 1993). The workers have displayed throughout this century in multiple milieux that they have fatherlands and motherlands, and that for them nation often trumps class in its appeal, both as an identity and as a perceived collective interest, and as a reason for fighting defensively or offensively. Marxist regimes in power have not, as they proclaimed, "solved the national question." Where Marxists won state power it was often as nationalist movements rather than as proletarian socialist internationalists. When they exercised state power they managed nationalism through repression or control, but failed to eliminate it. Indeed, failed Marxist regimes, such as Yugoslavia and the USSR, are perhaps the greatest living proof of the difficulties regimes have in trying to engineer anti-nationalist sentiments. This failure, in turn, casts some doubt on the heroic assumptions about the socialization powers of states, or of political elites, a point which is tacitly assumed in instrumentalist theories of nationalism. The third large instrumental school is individualist, and today goes by the title of RATIONAL CHOICE (see e.g., Hechter 1986; Banton 1995; Hardin 1995). Theorists within this tradition work with a stylized model of a rational per-

son who is narrowly motivated by self-interest, forward-looking, and maximizes expected utility subject to preferences and constraints on the feasibility of those preferences. Thus they see nationalism as a collective good, to which people will calculate their appropriate contributions on a cost-benefit calculus. They analyse, in particular, problems of nationalist mobilization which they typically see as a problem of collective action. A problem of collective action arises when what should be in the interests of all is not in the interests of each individual to contribute towards because they would benefit more from free-riding, or letting others provide the good or service in question. In these circumstances individuals are only likely to contribute if the probability that their own contribution will be decisive is very high, or if they are subject to a range of "selective incentives." Nationalism, however, seems to be less plagued by free-riding than other political movements—a matter to which rational choice theorists devote insufficient attention. Rational choice theory is usually espoused by liberals and libertarians (e.g., Banton), but there are also ex- or post-Marxist rational choice theorists (e.g., Hechter).

Rational choice accounts are often ingenious (see e.g., the contributions in Breton et al. 1995, or Latin's account of language strategies by political elites and citizens in multilingual societies, Latin 1992). However, they suffer from several recognized difficulties. First, although they may be able to account for individual nationalist conduct, for the conduct, for example, of politicians, bureaucrats, teachers or voters, given that they have nationalist preferences, instrumentalists are much less capable of explaining why people have nationalist preferences in the first place; or of explaining why such preferences are more frequent and intense in modern times than in the agrarian past. Second, rational choice theorists tend to reduce identities to interests. They assume that behind people's desires to be or become French, for example, there must lie an interest in French jobs, French pensions or French welfare benefits. However, historical experience should teach us that identities are much less elastic with regard to incentives than interests, and that people are culturally differentiated by their

Instrumentalist Theories of Nationalism

overt responsiveness to incentives. Third, rational choice theorists are often only pseudo-empirical, and their arguments are not amenable to testing. What rational choice theorists tend to do is to provide rational accounts of why so-called "choices" might have been rational. They very rarely probe deeply to see whether other accounts of the phenomena they seek to explain might be better. Lastly, ingenuity in this tradition is achieved by providing a rational account of what may otherwise appear manifestly irrational. Many features of nationalism, sunk costs in past traditions, the tapping of the emotions as well as interests, and its expressive attributes, seem invulnerable to the ingenuity of rational choice theorists. Perhaps this is the tradition's most important contribution, namely, to show the limits of rationality and choice when it comes to the examination of nationalism.

The instrumentalist habit of thought is found amongst "primordialists" (e.g., sociobiologists) as well as "modernists" (e.g., Marxists), so the temptation to equate modernist theories of nationalism with instrumentalism is false. All instrumentalist theoretical traditions have their place in any attempts to explain nationalist phenomena. This is so, as long as they are accompanied by accounts, which give due weight to the independent consequences of ideas and identities in shaping human conduct. It is possible, after all, to believe in the importance of both ideas and interests, or to believe in the importance of both interests and identities, or to believe in the importance of ideas and identities, and, lastly, to accommodate all three explanatory sources of the appeal of nationalism (ideas, interests and identities).

Bibliography

- Banton, M. 1995. "Rational Choice Theories," *American Behavioural Scientist* 38, 3: 478-97.
- Brass, P. 1991. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Breton, A., J.-L. Galeotti, et al. (eds.). 1995. *Nationalism and Rationality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Breuilly, John. 1993 (1982). *Nationalism and the State*. Revised edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Connor, W. 1984. *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Connor, W. 1994. *The Politics of Ethnonationalism*. Reno: Nevada University Press.
- Gellner, E. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Hardin, R. 1995. *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hechter, M. 1986. "Rational choice theory and the study of race and ethnic relations," in J. Rex and D. Mason (eds.), *Theories of Race and Ethnic Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hechter, M. 1975. *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Hobsbawm, E. and Ranger, T. (eds.). 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. 1990. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Horowitz, D. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kitcher, P. 1985. *Vaulting Ambition: Sociobiology and the Quest for Human Nature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Latini, D. 1992. *Language Repertoires and State Construction in Africa*. Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moore, C. 1974-5. "Were Marx and Engels Racists? The Prolet-Aryan Outlook of Marxism," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 19: 125-56.
- Naim, T. 1977. *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism*. London: New Left Books.
- Nimni, E. 1993. *Marxism and Nationalism: Theoretical Origins of the Present Crisis*. London: Pluto Press.
- O'Leary, B. 1997. "On the nature of nationalism: A critical appraisal of Ernest Gellner's writings on nationalism," *British Journal of Political Science* 27, 2: 191-222.
- Ringmar, E. 1996. *Identity, Interest and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schwartzmantel, J. 1992. *Socialism and the Idea of the Nation*. New York: Harvester.
- Smith, A. D. 1986. *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Integral Nationalism

Steinberg, S. 1981. *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America*. New York: Atheneum.

van den Bergh, P. L. 1987. *The Ethnic Phenomenon*. New York: Praeger.

Brendan O'Leary

Integral Nationalism

The concept of integral nationalism was used for the first time by Charles Maurras in an article entitled "Le Nationalisme intégral" that appeared in *Le Soleil* of March 2, 1900. In that article Maurras wrote that "Royalism corresponds essentially to the diverse postulates of nationalism: it is itself integral nationalism" (Butman 1970: 111). Maurras explained that "In the days of yore, to serve the king was to make oneself useful to the *Patrie*; to-day, inverting the expression, to make oneself useful to the *Patrie* is really to serve the cause of the king" (Butman 1970: 112). He argued that, in France, nationalism without royalism was a logical fallacy and that royalism completed nationalism, "since the monarchical institutions alone satisfied all the national aspirations, all the national ends, as the integral reproduced the sum of all the values of an algebraic function" (Butman 1970: 269).

Integral nationalism explains that the origins of decay, decadence and disunity in a nation are linked to the dangerous Enlightenment ideas of humanism and idealism. In practice, this form of nationalism represents a forceful attack on liberal and republican ideas, that, in turn, evokes emotions for a nostalgic return to the ancient glories of the past. Integral nationalism is also a longing for absolutism and totality, a call to regenerate the nation as whole through collective patriotic action.

The nation, in the integral nationalist paradigm, is a racially, ethnically, and culturally distinct entity, and must be preserved as such. Integral nationalism demands the total subjection of the individual to the nation, and argues that the well-being of the individual is dependent on the well-being of the nation. An irrepressible sense of pride and a deep longing for the past results in a strong sense of loyalty to the culture of the nation and the political ideology of the state. The cru-

elty and vulgarity of the New Order with its secular and liberal democratic theories and practices, violently threatens sacred traditions, the cultural and political values of the Old Order.

Both absolutist and totalitarian governance are defended as aesthetic expressions of patriotism. A nation is born because patriots help shape the humanity of the nation with its heroes, martyrs and saints. Humanity does not exist in itself, the nation is its essence!

The patriotic war at home must be waged against "foreign" intellectuals who popularize antipatriotic politics at home. Putative adversaries are vital to mobilize the masses in defense of the nation. Integral nationalists were highly effective in their attacks against the Jews, as usurers, parasites, dangerous humanists and cosmopolitans, who undermined the moral and cultural fabric of the nation. The Jews, in the integral nationalist paradigm, also became the personification of revolutionary radical humanism and idealism that destroyed divine rule and order.

For instance, during the 1880s, the time of the French Third Republic, Édouard Drumont (1844–1917) published anti-Semitic books and articles that held Jews responsible for the emergence of a liberal and blasphemous status quo and the downfall of the Second Empire. In 1894, when Captain Alfred Dreyfus was sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly supplying Germany with military secrets, Drumont and his followers argued that Jews were a suspect race most capable of treason. Maurice Barrès (1862–1923) and Charles Maurras (1868–1952), founders of *Action Française*, continued the anti-Semitic hysteria of Drumont and helped integrate anti-Semitism into the nationalism of *Action Française*. Whereas Barrès favored a dictatorship, Maurras fervently argued for hereditary monarchy in order to purify French culture and society.

To Italian patriot Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938), mystic patriotic festivals, national monuments and sacred objects would not only regenerate the aesthetic of politics in Italy, but they would also activate a militant nationalist political style. D'Annunzio popularized the poetic symbolism of the flame as the source of life, beauty and power, and also as the symbol of death and destruction. The flame became the symbol of fascism in Italy