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# **Nation and National Identity**

**The European Experience In Perspective**

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## The Manichean Myth: Rethinking the Distinction Between «Civic» and «Ethnic» Nationalism

Rogers Brubaker

From its late nineteenth century beginnings to the present, the study of nationhood and nationalism has been marked by deep ambivalence and intractable ambiguity. On the one side, nationalism has been associated with militarism, war, irrationalism, chauvinism, intolerance, homogenization, forced assimilation, authoritarianism, parochialism, xenophobia, ethnocentrism, ethnic cleansing, even genocide; it has been characterized as the «starkest political shame of the twentieth century» (Dunn 1979: 55). On the other side, nationhood and nationalism have been linked to democracy, self-determination, political legitimacy, social integration, civil religion, solidarity, dignity, identity, cultural survival, citizenship, patriotism, and liberation from alien rule.

One reason for the ambivalence, of course, is that «nation» and «nationalism» designate a whole world of different things. To a great extent, the ambivalence reflects not so much competing understandings and evaluations of the same thing, as alternative uses of the same term. Much of the ambivalence, that is, has been rooted in ambiguity. How people have evaluated nationalism has depended on what they have understood it to be.

Recognition of the protean quality of «nation» and «nationalism» – and of the normative ambivalence and conceptual ambiguity surrounding the subject – has engendered innumerable attempts at classification. Some typologies have been elaborate. In his early book *Theories of Nationalism*, for example, Anthony Smith classified national movements by the «formal» criteria of «intensity» and «achievement» and by the «substantive» criteria of «independence» and «distinctiveness.» The former yielded 6 types, the latter 12; cross-classifying them, with some simplification, yielded no fewer than 39 types for which Smith found corresponding historical or contemporary instances (Smith 1983: 211–229). Most classifications, however, have been quite simple, often founded on a single dichotomous distinction. And such distinctions have often been intended to do both normative and analytical work.

The most well known distinctions – between voluntaristic and organic, political and cultural, subjective and objective, liberal and illiberal, and civic and ethnic forms of nationalism – overlap to a great extent. They have an illustrious pedigree, going back to Friedrich Meinecke's distinction between *Staatsnation* and *Kulturnation* at the beginning of the century (Meinecke 1919) and, more

immediately, to Hans Kohn's influential midcentury work (Kohn 1944), usually glossed as distinguishing between «Western» and «Eastern» forms of nationalism.<sup>1</sup>

Of these overlapping distinctions, the one with the greatest resonance today, especially outside the narrow circle of researchers working primarily on nationalism, is the distinction between civic and ethnic understandings of nationhood and forms of nationalism. On this view there are, at bottom, only two kinds of nationalism: civic nationalism, characterized as liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive; and ethnic nationalism, glossed as illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive. These are seen as resting on two corresponding understandings of nationhood, based on common citizenship in the first case, common ethnicity in the second.

Sometimes, as in Kohn's work, this distinction is projected in space, and used to contrast the civic nationalism of Western Europe, or of «the West» in general, with the ethnic nationalism of Eastern Europe or other world regions. Such grand contrasts of world regions easily acquire a neo-orientalist flavor and lend themselves to the invocation of a dubious series of linked oppositions – between universalism and particularism, inclusion and exclusion, civility and violence, reason and passion, modern tolerance and ancient hatreds, transnational integration and nationalist disintegration, civic nationhood and ethnic nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

But this is not the typical way the distinction is used. The triumphalist – or, at best, complacent – account of Western civic nationalism is too obviously problematic for this view to be seriously entertained. The unexpected (and partly nationalist) resistance to the Maastricht treaty; the longstanding violent conflicts in northern Ireland and the Basque country; the intensifying ethno-political conflict in Belgium; and the electoral successes of xenophobic parties in many countries – all these have made it impossible to hold such an uncritical view of the essentially «civic» quality of West European nationalism.

More common is the use of the civic-ethnic opposition to make distinctions between states – or between national movements – rather than between whole

1 Actually Kohn himself did not speak of «Eastern nationalism»; but his principal distinction was indeed between «the West» and «the rest,» between the original forms of nationalism that developed in the «Western world» – in England, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United States – and those that later developed elsewhere, in the first instance in Germany and Central Europe, later in Eastern Europe and Asia.

2 While Kohn has been justly criticized for overgeneralizing about Western and non-Western forms of nationalism, and for downplaying differences among Western European and among Central and Eastern European forms of nationalism, it is important to underscore that *The Idea of Nationalism* is a vastly more nuanced and sophisticated book than most contemporary critics acknowledge.

world regions. This is often done in an ideological mode, to distinguish one's own good, legitimate civic nationalism from the illegitimate ethnic nationalism of one's neighbors or of other polities or movements, specified or implied. The leaders of post-independence Ukraine and Kazakhstan, for example, have self-consciously used the language of civic nationhood to present their states – especially to international audiences – as paragons of civic inclusiveness and tolerance, as the states of and for all their citizens, rather than as states of and for a single ethnocultural group. They – and scholars sympathetic to their cause – have pointed to their inclusive citizenship legislation, liberal language laws, and rhetoric of civic inclusiveness to mark a contrast with Estonia and Latvia, with their restrictive citizenship legislation, tough language laws, and rhetorical emphasis on ethnocultural survival.

Many separatist movements, too, use this self-legitimizing language of civic nationalism. The general election manifesto of the Welsh nationalist party Plaid Cymru, for example, proclaims its commitment to a «civic nationalism [that] welcomes all those living in Wales to join us in finding the solutions to [social and environmental] challenges and in restoring the equilibrium of social justice and environmental sustainability in Wales and Europe.»<sup>3</sup> Scottish National Party leaders emphasize even more strongly the party's civic nationalism, especially its inclusive, residentially based definition of Scottishness. So pronounced is this emphasis that a fringe nationalist group opposed to the SNP's rhetoric of civic nationalism has caustically criticized the «hogwash about being Scottish just because you happen to live in Scotland ... it is to be hoped that Scottishness will, through means of education and restored ethnic consciousness, cease to be the sad joke which in many cases it has become.»<sup>4</sup>

Scottish nationalist leaders generally like to align themselves with the Catalan, Québécois and other regional nationalisms. Yet they are willing to distance themselves from these movements to underscore their own commitment to civic nationalism. For example, after the narrow defeat of the Quebec sovereignty referendum in 1995, notoriously blamed by Québécois separatist leader Jacques Parizeau on the «ethnic vote,» SNP leader Alex Salmond said that «Quebec is not Scotland and Scotland is not Quebec ... The linguistic and ethnic basis of their nationalism is a two-edged sword. ... we follow the path of civic nationalism.»<sup>5</sup> For their part, Quebec nationalists have sought in recent years to project a more «modern,» unifying image of civic nationalism. But Parizeau's gaffe, together with a remark a few weeks earlier by separatist lea-

3 (General Election Manifesto, cited from <http://plaid-cymru.wales.com/policy/manifesto.htm>).

4 Siol nan Gaidheal, Scottish Cultural and Fraternal Organisation, Statement on «Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality» (<http://www.siol-nan-gaidheal.com/raetna.htm>).

5 The Scotsman, November 1, 1995.

der Lucien Bouchard about the low birth rate of Québécois, allowed critics of Québécois nationalism to turn the civic-ethnic distinction back against their opponents. To cite but one of many examples, the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, Canada's leading Anglophone newspaper, characterized Québécois separatism as «rooted in ethnic rather than civic nationalism. Blood is more important than citizenship».<sup>6</sup>

Paralleling this frankly political use of the civic-ethnic distinction to legitimate or discredit particular state policies or nationalist movements is its use in a scholarly mode to draw distinctions between different instances of nationalism and different modes of national self-understanding. Often this scholarly accounting of nationalism – bestowing the imprimatur of the civic on some states or movements, denying it to others – itself belongs to the sphere of nationalist politics in a broad sense. There is nothing new about this; for a century and a half, scholars have been participants in, and not mere observers of, nationalist politics. But the work done by the notion «civic» with its normative prestige, in such accounts may be more political than analytical: it may speak more to the putative international respectability and legitimacy of the state or movement in question than to its empirical characteristics.

In recent years, many scholars of nationalism have grown uncomfortable with the unequivocal sorting of cases into «civic» and «ethnic» categories. From a detached, analytical point of view, as numerous commentators have pointed out, it is often impossible, or at best problematic, to characterize an entire state, or an entire national movement, simply as civic or ethnic. As a result, efforts have been made to use the distinction in a more abstract manner. Instead of being used to characterize concrete cases, it is now most often used to characterize opposed analytical «elements» or tendencies and to show how they are mixed in different manners and proportions in concrete cases. Indeed so prevalent in the literature is this notion that individual states or national movements display a mixture of civic and ethnic elements or tendencies that it can be said to constitute a kind of theoretical «common sense.»

In the hands of sophisticated observers such as Anthony Smith, whose *Ethnic Origins of Nations* was particularly influential in promoting it, this use of the civic-ethnic distinction to designate analytical elements that are found in concrete cases «in varying proportions at particular moments of their history» (Smith 1986: 149) is certainly an improvement over the unequivocal sorting of states and nationalist movements as a whole – to say nothing of entire regions

<sup>6</sup> Reported in Washington Post, October 18, 1995. On media over-reaction to Parizeau's gaffe, see Seymour et al. (1998: 29).

– into «civic» or «ethnic» categories. Yet even in this more abstract and analytical mode, I want to argue, the civic-ethnic distinction remains both analytically and normatively problematic. It is to this argument that I now turn.<sup>7</sup>

## 1 Analytical ambiguities

Let me begin with what I see as the analytical weakness of the civic-ethnic distinction. Both terms are deeply ambiguous. Their ambiguity can be highlighted by asking how culture fits in to the civic-ethnic scheme. There are in fact two very different ways of mapping culture onto the civic-ethnic distinction, but I will argue that neither is satisfactory.

What is «ethnic» about ethnic nationalism? Advocates of the civic-ethnic distinction have a ready answer: nation-membership is understood to be based on ethnicity. But this simply pushes the question one step back. What is «ethnicity»? As analysts going back to Max Weber have emphasized, «ethnicity» is an exceedingly ambiguous notion.<sup>8</sup> Consider here just one aspect of that ambiguity, involving the relation between «ethnicity» and culture.

On the one hand, ethnic nationalism may be interpreted narrowly, as involving an emphasis on descent, and, ultimately, on biology. «Strictly speaking,» as Anthony Smith noted in his first book on nationalism, «ethnicity refers to common descent» (Smith 1983: 180). Yet construing ethnicity narrowly in this manner severely constricts the domain of ethnic nationalism. For as Smith himself went on to observe, many «commonly accepted «nations» ... do not invoke a common ancestor,» and even when nationalist argumentation does in-

<sup>7</sup> The core of the argument that follows was presented in «Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism,» presented first as a paper to the Center for European and Russian Studies, UCLA, in March 1996, and published in Brubaker (1998). Since that paper was written, three other critiques of the ethnic-civic dichotomy have appeared: Yack (1996), Seymour et al. (1998) and Schnapper (1998). Although there are convergences between parts of Yack's and Seymour et al.'s arguments and my own, they examine the civic-ethnic distinction primarily from the point of view of normative political philosophy. (For related arguments in political theory, see also Fine (1994), Nielsen (1996), and Xenos (1996).) Schnapper, on the other hand, is a sociologist, but her argument is quite different from mine. As Seymour et al. point out (p. 25), Schnapper claims to be problematizing the civic-ethnic distinction, but in effect does so by endorsing and re-stating the civic account.

<sup>8</sup> As Max Weber observed, «the collective term «ethnic» ... is unsuitable for a really rigorous analysis,» for it «subsumes phenomena that a rigorous sociological analysis ... would have to distinguish carefully: the actual subjective effect of those customs conditioned by heredity and those determined by tradition; the differential impact of the varying content of custom; the influence of common language, religion and political action, past and present, on the formation of customs; the extent to which such factors create attraction and repulsion, and especially the belief in affinity or disaffinity of blood; the consequences of this belief for social action in general, and specific for action on the basis of shared custom or blood relationship, for diverse sexual relations, etc. ... Thus the concept of the «ethnic» group ... dissolves if we define our terms exactly.» (Weber 1968: 94f.).

volve «imputed common descent,» this is «usually a minor claim» (p. 180f.).<sup>9</sup> On the strict understanding of ethnicity, nationalist rhetoric emphasizing common culture, but not common descent,<sup>10</sup> has to be coded as a kind of civic nationalism.<sup>11</sup> But then the category of civic nationalism becomes too heterogeneous to be useful, while that of ethnic nationalism is severely underpopulated.

On the other hand, «ethnic» may be construed broadly, as *ethnocultural*. This is the path Smith chose in *Theories of Nationalism*, treating «ethnic» [as] identical with the term «cultural», without further specification» (1983: 180). In this case, the problem is just the opposite: virtually all nationalisms would have to be coded as ethnic. Thus for Eric Hobsbawm, «Every separatist movement in Europe ... bases itself on «ethnicity», linguistic or not, that is to say on the assumption that «we» – the Basques, Catalans, Scots, Croats, or Georgians are a different people from the Spaniards, the English, the Serbs or the Russians.» (Hobsbawm 1996: 256). By defining «ethnicity» so expansively that it is coextensive with a sense of separate «peoplehood», however that sense of peoplehood is grounded, Hobsbawm codes as «ethnic» what others often classify as «civic» – Catalan and Scottish nationalism, for example. Civic nationalism is thereby defined out of existence or, as on Hobsbawm's account, relegated to an earlier phase of historical development.

9 In later work, Smith revised this view, and came to attribute greater importance to imputed common descent. In *The Ethnic Revival*, Smith argues – implausibly, in my view – that a «myth of common and unique origin in time and place» is «essential for the sense of ethnic community», and notes that «cultural dimensions remain secondary ... to the sense of common origins and history of the group. This constitutes the core of the group's identity, and of its sense of uniqueness.» (Smith 1981: 66f.). *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, in turn, qualifies this view: «if one cannot point to alleged filiation and imputed common ancestry for all citizens, one can at least trace one's cultural pedigree back to some antique exemplars which, allegedly, embodied the same qualities, values and ideals that are being sought by the «nation-to-be» today» (Smith 1986: 147).

10 A further difficulty is that the notion of «common descent» is itself ambiguous. It too can be interpreted strictly or loosely. Strictly speaking, common descent implies descent from a single common ancestor. Loosely interpreted, common descent involves some rhetoric emphasis on common ancestry or common «blood,» without the implausible specification of a single common ancestor. (Still more loosely interpreted, as in Anthony Smith's recent work, it shades over into a rhetorical emphasis on common «ideological» rather than «genealogical» descent; see Smith (1986: 147f.) How do we know whether there is a significant emphasis on common descent? Germany, for example, is often treated as a paradigmatic case of ethnic nationalism. Yet can one seriously maintain that there was a strong emphasis on common descent at Bismarck's time? Surely it is not enough to quote Bismarck's urging Germans to «think with your blood», as Walker Connor (1994: 93, 198) does, especially when Bismarck's consistently statist orientation, and his distance from all manifestations of voelkisch nationalism, is well documented in the literature. Nor is it enough to point to the exclusive reliance on *jus sanguinis* in German citizenship law. *Jus sanguinis* is a legal technique that is the foundation of citizenship law throughout continental Europe, France included. The distinctive consistency with which the principle has been carried through in German law indeed requires explanation, and I have tried in *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* to provide such an explanation (Brubaker 1992), but I do not think one takes a legal principle for regulating membership of the state as a direct indicator of widely shared social understandings of what constitutes membership of the nation.

11 This assumes, of course, that the civic-ethnic distinction is understood to be exhaustive, which is how it is usually treated: understandings of nationhood are said to be either civic or ethnic.

Nor is ambiguity limited to the term «ethnic.» The category «civic» is equally ambiguous. On the one hand, civic nationalism may be interpreted strictly, as involving an acultural, ahistorical, universalist, voluntarist, rationalist understanding of nationhood. «The nation» is then construed as a voluntary association of culturally unmarked individuals. Nation-membership is understood as chosen rather than given, as a «daily plebiscite,» in Renan's celebrated metaphor.

Yet construing civic nationalism strictly in this fashion risks defining the phenomenon out of existence. Even the cases most often cited as paradigmatic of civic nationalism – France and America – involve a crucial cultural component or, in Hobsbawm's terms, a strong sense of separate peoplehood.<sup>12</sup> A purely acultural understanding of nationhood has never been widely held. It is a model of nationhood that has never been instantiated, existing only as a conceptual ideal type. Even as an ideal type, it is problematic. Although Ernest Renan is often cited as the locus classicus for this model, this reflects a one-sided reading of his famous lecture. The «daily plebiscite» remark – a self-conscious rhetorical flourish which Renan prefaced by asking his audience to «pardon the metaphor» – does indeed underscore the importance, for Renan, of the importance of subjective self-understanding in constituting nationhood (Renan 1996: 53). But Renan's understanding of nationhood is far from acultural or purely voluntaristic. It is a «thick,» not a «thin» understanding. Renan stresses the constitutive significance of the «possession in common of a rich legacy of memories»; he characterizes the nation as «the culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice, and devotion» (p. 52). In this sense, the nation is «given» as well as «chosen».<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, civic nationalism may be defined broadly. The definition offered by Michael Keating, a sympathetic yet sophisticated analyst of Scottish, Catalan, and Quebecois nationalisms, is worth quoting at length. Keating defines civic nationalism as a collective enterprise

«rooted in individual assent rather than ascriptive identity. It is based on common values and institutions, and patterns of social interaction. The bearers of national identity are institutions, customs, historical memories and rational secular values. Anyone can join the nation irrespective of birth or ethnic origins, though the cost of adaptation varies.

12 Two recent books argue for the existence of an American cultural nationality. Against the «exceptionalist» view that sees American nationhood as uniquely and purely political, as founded on an idea, they see America as a nation-state founded on a common, and distinctive, American culture (Hollinger 1995, Lind 1995).

13 The argument here parallels Yack (1996: 197E).

There is no myth of common ancestry ... [Nationhood is] based on territorially defined community, not upon a social boundary among groups within a territory. This is not to say that any piece of real estate can form the basis for a nationalism. There need to be a structured set of political and social interactions guided by common values and a sense of common identity.» (Keating 1996: 5–6).

Keating wants to have it both ways. He retains the rationalist, universalist emphasis on choice characteristic of «thin» understandings of civic nationalism. At the same time his more sociologically realistic understanding of nationhood pushes him to acknowledge the importance of «common values,» «customs,» «historical memories» and a «sense of common identity.» Yet these are just the sort of particularist, thick, given factors highlighted by broad, culturalist understandings of ethnicity. The factors highlighted by Keating are not all that different, for example, from the quartet of «myths, memories, values, and symbols» emphasized by Anthony Smith in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*.

To sum up the argument so far: A narrow understanding of ethnicity severely constricts the domain of ethnic nationalism and leaves the residually defined civic category too large and heterogeneous to be useful. Conversely, a narrow understanding of the civic severely constricts the domain of civic nationalism and leaves the residually defined ethnic category too large and heterogeneous to be useful. If one combines a strict understanding of civic and a strict understanding of ethnic nationalism, then one is left with few instances of either one and a large middle ground that counts as neither, and one can no longer think of the civic-ethnic distinction as an *exhaustive* way of classifying types or manifestations of nationalism. If one combines, finally, a broad understanding of civic and a broad understanding of ethnic nationalism, one confronts a large middle ground that could be classified either way, and one can no longer think of the civic-ethnic distinction as *mutually exclusive*.

Advocates of the civic-ethnic distinction would argue that this large middle group consists of cases that combine civic and ethnic elements. But the problem is not that it is difficult to know, on balance, how to classify a «case.» The problem is rather that the deep ambiguity of the terms «civic» and «ethnic,» and in particular the uncertain place of culture in the civic-ethnic scheme, calls into question the usefulness of the distinction itself. It can be just as difficult to classify an «element» as it is to classify an entire «case.»

How, for example, are we to classify policies designed to promote a particular language at the state or provincial level? From the point of view lyrically articulated by Benedict Anderson, for whom the nation is «conceived in language,

not in blood,» and is therefore «joinable in time» (Anderson 1991: 145), there can be nothing «ethnic» about such policies, even if they might be judged restrictive, illiberal, or even chauvinistic. Indeed, from another point of view one could go further and characterize such policies as positively civic, that is, as indispensable for the promotion of republican citizenship. The assimilationist language politics of the French Revolution was justified in just such a civic idiom in Abbé Grégoire's report «On the necessity and means of abolishing the patois and universalizing the use of the French language.» Only when all citizens speak the same language, the report argued, can all citizens «communicate their thoughts without hindrance» and enjoy equal access to state offices (de Certeau et al. 1975: 302) And as John Stuart Mill put it 65 years later: «Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist» (Mill 1975: 382).

From another point of view, however, linguistic nationalism is simply a particular expression of ethnic nationalism. When «ethnic» is understood broadly as ethnocultural, or simply as cultural without qualification, then to conceptualize the nation as a community of language, to demand autonomy or independence in the name of such a community, to limit access to citizenship to persons knowing the language, and to promote or require teaching, publishing, broadcasting, administering, or advertising in that language count as central, indeed paradigmatic manifestations of ethnic nationalism.

## 2 Normative ambiguities

The distinction between civic and ethnic understandings of nationhood and forms of nationalism is not only, or even primarily, an analytical distinction. It is also, at the same time, a normative one. This fusion of analytical and normative criteria was characteristic already of Hans Kohn's work. Kohn's portrayal of pioneering Western nationalisms joined neutral analytical observations about their «predominantly political» character, reflecting the fact that national consciousness developed within the framework of existing states, to a normative celebration of the spirit of «individual liberty and rational cosmopolitanism» that he saw as informing such nationalisms. Similarly, his portrayal of the later nationalisms of Germany and central and Eastern Europe joined neutral analytical observations about their initially cultural character, reflecting the fact that national consciousness developed outside of and in opposition to the framework of existing states, to a normatively charged evocation of the illiberal tendencies that he saw as inherent in those nationalisms (Kohn 1944: 329–331).

Even as the distinction has been stripped, in most uses, of the concrete spatial reference given to it by Kohn, it has retained the same normative valence. Civic nationalism is generally glossed as liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive, ethnic nationalism as illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive. Except for the opposition between universalism and particularism, which finds contemporary partisans on both sides, it is hard to imagine a more normatively loaded, one-sided characterization. Who could have a good word for a form of nationalism routinely glossed as illiberal, ascriptive, and exclusive? How could one criticize a form of nationalism understood to be liberal, voluntarist, and inclusive? When civic and ethnic nationalism are paired, the former is invariably a term of praise, the latter a term of abuse.

Yet although the normative opposition seems unambiguous, matters are in fact more complicated. Take for example the characterization of civic nationalism as inclusive and of ethnic nationalism as exclusive.<sup>14</sup> In fact all understandings of nationhood and all forms of nationalism are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive. What varies is not the fact or even the degree of inclusiveness or exclusiveness, but the bases or criteria of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>15</sup>

Civic understandings of nationhood are glossed as inclusive for one of two reasons. The most common is that the civic nation is based on citizenship, and therefore includes all citizens, regardless of their particularistic traits. But citizenship itself, by its very nature, is an exclusive as well as an inclusive status. On a global scale, citizenship is an immensely powerful instrument of social closure (Brubaker 1992). It shields prosperous and peaceful states from the great majority of those who – in a world without borders and exclusive citizenries – would seek to flee war, civil strife, famine, joblessness, or environmental degradation, or who would move in the hope of securing greater opportunities for their children. Access to citizenship is everywhere limited; and even if it is open, in principle, to persons regardless of ethnicity, this is small consolation to those excluded from citizenship, and even from the possibility of applying for citizenship, by being excluded from the territory of the state. This «civic» mode of exclusion is exceptionally powerful. On a global scale, it is probably far more important, in shaping life chances and sustaining massive and morally arbitrary inequalities, than is any kind of exclusion based on putative ethnicity. But it is largely invisible, because we take it for granted. Only among philosophers and political theorists, in recent years, has there been some attention to issues such as open borders, or some moves to recast Rawlsian accounts of jus-

14 For recent examples, see Ignatieff (1993), Kupchan (1995), and Khazanov (1997).

15 For a treatment of the civic/ethnic distinction that recognizes this point, see Breton (1988).

tice on a global scale<sup>16</sup>. In wider spheres of public debate, this kind of closure and exclusion is simply never questioned.

Civic understandings of nationhood have also been characterized as inclusive because they comprise «all those – regardless of race, color, creed, gender, language, or ethnicity – who subscribe to the nation's political creed» (Ignatieff 1993: 6). The emphasis on a constitutive political creed echoes an older literature on American nationalism, according to which American national identity was essentially ideological and therefore uniquely open.<sup>17</sup> That view has been much criticized in the last two decades, notably by Rogers Smith, who sees American understandings of nationhood as pervasive informed, for much of the country's history, by an ethnocultural or «inegalitarian ascriptive» strand of thinking as well as by liberal and republican strands (R. Smith 1997: 2ff, 14ff). But even apart from its historical accuracy in the American context, the creedal model of membership has its own logic of exclusion. The French Revolution provides the paradigmatic examples of such exclusions – of emigrés, refractory priests, noblemen, rebels, and other presumed political opponents. At the opposite end of the political spectrum, McCarthyism provides the paradigmatic example in the American context. But it is worth remembering that, even in Germany – often treated as the key exemplar of ethnic nationalism – Catholics and Social Democrats were excluded from the moral community of the nation in Bismarck's time and characterized as internal «enemies of the Reich» not by virtue of ethnicity, but by virtue of their imputed lack of loyalty to the national state.

Understandings of nationhood as based on citizenship or political creed, then, are not *more* inclusive, but *differently* inclusive – and exclusive – than understandings of nationhood as based on cultural community or common descent. And not only are the *exclusions* on which they are premised normatively problematic, but so too, in certain contexts, is their very *inclusiveness*. Transylvanian Hungarians, for example, resent and resist the putatively inclusive, citizenship-based rhetoric of nationhood which construes them as members of the Roma-

16 On open borders, Carens (1987) is a pioneering statement. For the more general argument that the Rawlsian «original position» should be interpreted on a global scale, see Beitz (1979).

17 Drawing on Hans Kohn's influential account (Kohn 1957), Philip Gleason argues that «To be or become an American, a person did not have to be of any particular national, linguistic, religious, or ethnic background. All he had to do was to commit himself to the political ideology centered on the abstract ideals of liberty, equality, and republicanism. Thus the universalist ideological character of American nationality meant that it was open to anyone who willed to become an American» (Gleason 1980: 32). To be sure, the overwhelming British stock of white American settlers at the end of the eighteenth century meant there was a «latent predisposition toward an ethnically defined concept of nationality ... [But] such exclusiveness ran contrary to the logic of the defining principles, and the official commitment to those principles has worked historically to overcome exclusions and to make the practical boundaries of American identity more congruent with its theoretical universalism» (p. 33).

→ republicanism.



nian nation. On their own self-understanding, they are citizens of the Romanian state, but members of a Hungarian cultural nation that cuts across the boundaries of state and citizenship.

In the early 1980s – to take another example – some second-generation Algerian immigrants protested against the French nationality that had been attributed to them automatically at birth. For reasons having to do with a technicality of French citizenship law, they had been unaware of this attribution until, upon reaching age 16 and applying for residence permits as foreigners, they were stupefied to be told by officials that they were French. While some welcomed this news – French nationality, after all, would protect them against expulsion – others «experienced the attribution of French nationality as a violation of their personality, their familial attachments, and their membership of a newly emancipated [Algerian] nation» (GISTI 1983: 6), and several thousand formally requested – in vain – to be released from the nationality that had been attributed to them without their knowledge, against their will, and in violation of their self-understanding as Algerians. The Algerian government too objected to the unilateral imposition of citizenship on «its» emigrants; after «the years of murderous conflict aimed precisely at giving them their own nationality,» [142] this was regarded as a neocolonial affront to Algerian sovereignty.

The conventional gloss of civic and ethnic understandings of nationhood as voluntaristic and ascriptive, respectively, is also problematic. In the first place, it is greatly overdrawn. Only on implausibly acultural and ahistorical construals of civic nationalism can nation-membership be understood as entirely voluntary; on richer and more realistic accounts, including Renan's own account, as we have already seen, the nation is understood as given as well as chosen. On the other hand, choice is far from irrelevant in settings where nationhood is understood to be based on ethnocultural commonality such as Central and Eastern Europe, usually considered the *locus classicus* of ethnic nationalism. As Hobsbawm observed, commenting on the «paradoxes of primordial ethnicity,» «early twentieth century Europe was full of men and women who, as their very names indicate, had *chosen* to be Germans or Magyars or French or Finns» (Hobsbawm 1996: 260–259, emphasis in the original).

Moreover, the normative valence of the opposition between chosenness and givenness is more complex than the loaded contrast between voluntary and ascriptive suggests. Liberal moral and political theory have indeed celebrated voluntary engagements, commitments, and affiliations over ascribed statuses. But the communitarian critique of liberalism (Sandel 1982), and the development of a variant of liberalism more sensitive to the cultural contexts of choice (Kymlicka 1989) have led to an enhanced appreciation of the ways in which

choices are meaningful only against the horizon of unchosen cultural contexts. And this in turn has led to a tempering and relativization of the opposition between chosenness and givenness.

I have mentioned Kymlicka in connection with newly «culturalist» accounts of liberalism. But he has also, of course, been a central figure in recent discussions of multiculturalism (Kymlicka 1995). These discussions, too, have problematized the normative opposition between civic and ethnic nationalism. By valorizing particular cultural attachments and identities – including ethnic or ethnocultural attachments and identities – and by seeing the public recognition of such particularistic attachments as central to and supportive of rather than antithetical to citizenship (even to *liberal* citizenship, on Kymlicka's account), multiculturalism destabilizes and relativizes the normative contrast between civic and ethnic nationalism.

### 3 A modest alternative

From an analytical point of view, a less ambiguous distinction than that between civic and ethnic nationalism can be drawn between *state-framed* and *counter-state* understandings of nationhood and forms of nationalism. In the former, «nation» is conceived as congruent with the state, and as institutionally and territorially framed by it. In the latter, «nation» is imagined as distinct from, and often in opposition to, the territorial and institutional frame of an existing state or states. The former is equivalent to Meinecke's notion of the *Staatsnation*; the latter, however, is a wider category than Meinecke's *Kultur-nation*.

There is not necessarily anything «civic» – in the normatively robust sense of that term – about state-framed nationhood or nationalism. It is the state – not citizenship – that is the cardinal point of reference; and the state that frames the nation need not be democratic, let alone robustly so.<sup>18</sup> The sense of «nation» that developed gradually in *ancien régime* France was framed by the state from the beginning, but it became linked to ideas of citizenship only during the Revolution. To take another example, when Prussian reformers sought to transform Prussia into a «nation» in the early nineteenth century, to «do from

18 In the notion of civic nationalism, the reference to citizenship is ambiguous. What does it mean for nation-membership to be based on citizenship? In a thin sense, it means only that nationhood is framed by the state, and that the nation is understood to comprise all citizens – or subjects – of the state. In a thicker sense, it implies some connection to active citizenship, to civic participation, to democracy. It is these latter connotations that give the notion of civic nationalism its normative prestige. Once again, the conflation of analytical and normative criteria engenders ambiguity, which the normatively neutral notion of state-framed nationalism permits us to escape this ambiguity.

above what the French had done from below,» as one of the leading reformers put it, the «nation» they envisaged – Prussian, not German! – was conceived as framed by the state, yet one could not characterize it as based on citizenship. The same is true of the nationalisms of many authoritarian contemporary states.

Moreover, the notion of state-framed nationhood or nationalism enables us to talk about the way in which linguistic, cultural and even (narrowly) ethnic aspects of nationhood and nationalism may be framed, mediated, and shaped by the state. For while there is a definitional antithesis between *civic* nationhood and ethnicity – and on some interpretations between civic nationhood and culture – there is no such antithesis between *state-framed* nationhood and ethnicity or culture. State-framed nationalisms are often imbued with a strong cultural content.<sup>19</sup> France, for example, is a paradigmatic instance of state-framed nationhood. At the same time, culture is understood as constitutive of French nationhood.<sup>20</sup> There is no contradiction here. The culture that is understood to be constitutive of nationhood is a pervasively state-framed, and, in modern times, state-propagated culture; it is not conceived as prior to and independent of the territorial and institutional frame of the state.

Counter-state nationalisms, on the other hand, need not be specifically ethnic; nationhood conceived as distinct from or in opposition to an existing state need not be conceived in ethnic terms, or even, more loosely, in ethnocultural terms. Quite apart from the difference, discussed above, between narrowly ethnic and broadly ethnocultural understandings of nationhood, counter-state definitions of nation may be based on territory, on historic provincial privileges, or on the possession of a distinct political history prior to incorporation into a larger state. Early anti-Habsburg Hungarian nationalism, for example, was couched in the idiom of historic constitutional privileges until the end of the eighteenth century, when increasing emphasis began to be placed on protecting and developing the Magyar language. An intriguing contemporary example is furnished by Northern Italian regional nationalism, in which «Padania» (the term is from the Po river valley) is conceptualized not simply as a «region» but as a north Italian «nation» entitled to national self-determination.

19 As Anthony Smith (1986:136) puts it, albeit in language too functionalist for my taste, «territorial nations must also be cultural communities. The solidarity of citizenship required a common «civil religion» formed out of shared myths and memories and symbols, and communicated in a standard language through educational institutions. So the territorial nation becomes a mass educational enterprise. [Its] aim is cultural homogeneity. Men and women must be socialized into a uniform and shared way of life and belief-system, one that ... marks them off from outsiders.» (*Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 136).

20 I believe now that I was mistaken when I argued in earlier work that «political unity has been understood as constitutive, cultural unity as expressive of nationhood.» (Brubaker 1992:10).

Moreover, even when the nation in question is defined in cultural or ethnic terms, counter-state nationalisms may partake of «civic» qualities. This is most evident in cases such as Catalonia, Scotland, or Quebec where there is an institutionally defined sphere within which a substantial degree of self-government is possible (Keating 1996). But even counter-state nationalist movements without a formally secured sphere of institutionalized autonomy within the larger state can provide settings for the cultivation and exercise of «civic» virtues – for example by organizing and running schools, credit associations, cooperative enterprises, and welfare organizations.

#### 4 Conclusion

The civic-ethnic distinction addresses important analytical and normative issues, but it does not do so in a satisfactory fashion. It can be seen as a routinization and codification of the various efforts scholars have made to come to terms with the normative ambivalence and empirical ambiguity surrounding the protean phenomena grouped under the umbrella term «nationalism.» It represents an effort to domesticate these normatively and empirically unruly phenomena, to impose conceptual and moral order on them, to subsume them under a convenient formula, to render them suitable grist for academic mills.

Yet nationalism resists neat parsing into types with clearly contrasting empirical and moral profiles. Distinctions are of course unavoidable in analytical and normative inquiry alike, but we should not expect too much of a single distinction. The civic-ethnic distinction is overburdened; it is expected to do too much work. We would do better to disentangle the work of analytical ordering from that of normative appraisal. The distinction between state-framed and counter-state understandings of nationhood is offered as one very modest way of doing some of the analytical work done by the civic-ethnic distinction without the attendant confusion. The inexhaustible moral and political ambiguities and dilemmas generated by nationalism can then be addressed on their own terms.

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