Notes on the Political Economy of Nationalism

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The resurgence of nationalism all over the world in the last few years can be said to arise, in every case, from a lack of congruence between "state" and "nation." While each of these terms is highly complex and controversial, we all know the main difference between them. The state is a political and administrative unit, claiming the "monopoly of the legitimate use of force" over all the inhabitants of a given territory. The nation, on the other hand, is an "imagined community," including the dead and the unborn, who are bound together by the ties of kinship, language, custom and shared myths that separate it from other similar collectivities.[1/] Thus we can have a nation without a state, as in the case of the Kurds, or states that comprise many nations, such as the former USSR and Yugoslavia, and a nation divided between several states, as in the case of the Italians and Germans before unification in the nineteenth century, or the two Germanys and two Koreas of more recent history.

I.

It is tempting to specify the one-to-one corres-pondence between state and nation as a sort of long-run equilibrium condition, which generates persistent turbulence whenever it is not fulfilled. There are many ways in which the movement toward equilibrium can take place. A single nation could establish a powerful state that expands to incorporate other nations within it. The "subject" nations might then assimilate gradually to the dominant one, by adopting its

language, culture and religion so that eventually all the citizens of the state come to feel themselves as essentially one nation. Something like this is what happened in the case of the "old continuous nations" of Western Europe, such as Britain and France.[2/] In the case of movements for national unification, one of the states of the common nation, Prussia under Bismarck or Piedmont under Cavour, prevailed upon the others by force and diplomacy to create what roughly corresponded to genuine nation-states.

The problems of nationalism that are exercising us most today, however, are all the legacy of the collapse of the great empires of the last few hundred years, that of the Hapsburgs, the Russians (first under the czars and then the communists), and the Ottoman, in Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East, and the European colonial empires in Asia and Africa. In almost no case is there a congruence between state and nation in any one of the successor states of those former empires. One exception is Austria, the core of the Hapsburg empire, where we have a mainly German-speaking, Roman Catholic nation. Hungary is itself more or less ethnically homogeneous but about a third of the Hungarians in the world live as minorities in Romania, the Voivodina province of Serbia in Yugoslavia, and the Slovak part of Czechoslovakia, which has split into the Czech lands and Slovakia, so that only the former will be ethnically homogeneous. Yugoslavia is of course the most intractable case of all with the still unresolved

secession of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzergovina, as well as the difficult problem of Kossovo and the Albanians and the many complexities of Macedonia.

In the case of the former Soviet Union, the ethnic problems are also painfully apparent. Substantial Russian ethnic minorities are located in Ukraine, the Baltic states, Kazakhstan and Moldova while ethnic feuds have already broken out in the Caucasus and some of the Central Asian republics. Russia itself has substantial minorities such as the Tartars within it.

In the Middle East, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire left Iraq a rich and fertile territory very sharply divided on ethnic and religious lines, while leaving a large Kurdish minority in Turkey itself. Sudan has a major ethnic and religious problem between the Arabized Islamic north and the African non-Islamic south. Syria and Lebanon, in particular, have sharp sectarian differences within their populations.

Dozens, if not scores, of new states were created by the successive "decolonizations" after the Second World War of the former imperial possessions of the British, French, Dutch, Belgians and Portuguese. In most cases, this process resulted in the formation of states whose borders contained highly disparate populations, that had not constituted integrated communities prior to the European dominion. In many cases, as with the Indians in East Africa, significant components of the

populations were immigrants from other, quite distant, colonies. Many of these colonial territories had strong nationalist movements that agitated and fought for independence, under unifying ideologies that stressed the common links of the subject populations as against the colonial rulers. After independence, however, severe conflicts emerged on the basis of what Clifford Geertz (1973) calls the "primordial" diversities of ethnicity, language and religion.

In many cases the European colonial states were much larger and more integrated than their predecessors, such as the Mughal Empire in India or the sultanates in the East Indies. The newly independent post-colonial states therefore all faced critical secession struggles during or soon after their emergence. In some cases they have been successful, for example Bangladesh, but for the most part they have failed, as with the attempt of Biafra to break away from Nigeria.

Another completely different type of state was also created by the European expansion over the rest of the world of the last few centuries. This is the type of state established in the New World and in Australia and New Zealand with settlers of mainly European origin. Although there are exceptions such as Mexico and Peru, where significant numbers of the indigenous populations survived, for the most part these new European overseas states eliminated the original inhabitants as a result of disease and warfare. In these states there has either been a dominant European group such as the Spanish in Latin America,

or a "melting pot" of largely European origin, as in the United States. In neither case has there been a significant "nationality" as distinct from simply ethnic problem within the boundaries of the state. An important exception, of course, is the French-Canadians of Quebec.

The outcome has been very different when Europeans settled in Africa. In Algeria the _pied noir_ left after a very bitter war of independence, as did most of the British from Kenya and to a lesser extent Zimbabwe. Thus the potential nationality problem in these cases has been solved by the emigration of the European settlers. In South Africa, however, the peculiarly intractable and potentially still explosive problem remains of how to accommodate three or four million people of European descent with five or six times that number of natives and Asian immigrants.

Nationalism is the ideology that animates a people who feel the sense of cultural identity that we associate with the concept of nation. It stresses what sets them apart from others and thus serves as a support in struggles with other nations within the same state, or in other states. It is generally regarded as having arisen in France during the time of the French Revolution and to have spread to the rest of Europe in the course of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, in imitation of or opposition to the nation that founded it. As Huizinga (1940) has stressed the emotion of patriotism and the sense of national consciousness and identity can be traced

back to Antiquity and the Middle Ages. These however were subordinated to the influence of the "universal" religion of the Roman Catholic church, the feudal magnates and dynastic states. It was only after national unification had already taken place in France and Great Britain that nationalism in the modern sense emerged. This is the "received doctrine," ably expounded in surveys by Minogue (1970), Alter (1989), Smith (1979), and especially Seton-Watson (1977).

II.

Despite the vast extent of the literature analytical "theories" or "models" of nationalism, that attempt to account for the phenomenon in terms of some unifying Gestalt are unfortunately rather scarce.

The most ambitious and stimulating theory of nationalism I have encountered is that of Ernest Gellner (1983). His theory is cast in terms of an evolutionary view of the historical process, in the nineteenth century manner of Comte, Morgan and Marx, in which the economic system is first based on hunting and gathering, then agriculture and finally industry. Specialization and the division of labor can be highly developed in agrarian societies, particularly the agrarian empires of the Orient, but "culture" in the sense of an integrated symbolic system based on a written language is confined to a narrow class of priests and bureaucrats. The "cultures" of the peasantry, who form the productive base of the system, are confined to purely local dialects and cults.

Conflict in this type of society is confined to peasant rebellions or power struggles over control of the state by different aristocratic or bureaucratic factions, but the higher culture itself remains invariant and common to all contending parties, or is acquired by successful outsiders, as in the case of the "barbarian" invaders of China such as the Mongols and the Manchus.

Specialization and the division of labor take a completely different dynamic form in "industrial" society. Rather than each worker learning a traditional craft and practicing it for life in a closed guild or caste, as in agrarian society, all workers must be highly mobile and versatile between specializations on the basis of a high common level of general education. Integration of the economy through market forces takes the place of rent and tax payments in kind, requiring the transmission and reception of complex "messages" over a wide area in some common medium. Thus we have the development of uniform literary languages for efficient dissemination to a wide public in print. Everyone's horizons are broadened by these contacts and a common "national" culture develops for the whole society instead of the previous diversity of "local" cultures. The incessant technical change of industrial society requires education to be extended to all, with an increasingly high minimal level.

If all these changes take place within a culturally homogeneous society, where "culture" essentially means language

and its usual associations of a shared history, all is well and the society can progress in a peaceful manner. Contrary to Marx, class differences based on property and income do not lead to revolution and are eventually ironed out by competition in the market place based on merit and achievement. Rewards are unequally distributed but all have access and the opportunity to compete.

Suppose, however, that there are two "cultures" in the society instead of one, in the Gellner rather than the C.P. Snow sense. Furthermore, suppose that one of them, the "Hapsburg" or the "Ottoman" one, enjoys an effective monopoly of public offices and access to higher education, both of which are conducted in a language distinct from that of the subordinate "Czech" or "Serbian" culture. Economic development is at such a level that Czechs and Serbs are active partici- pants in the economy, but are deprived of the opportunities for higher public office and education.

This situation creates, in Gellner's view, the classic "Hapsburg (and points east and south)" nationalism that has been so potent a force, for good and evil, in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans for the last hundred and fifty years and is now raging again after the Communist interlude, with the "return of history" as Misha Glenny (1990) calls it. In terms of the simple "two-culture" model that Gellner adopts to derive his typology of nationalisms, the solution is obtained by the subject nation casting off the yoke of the

dominant one and expelling it from the territory that both occupied, as a result of war, revolution or voluntary surrender by the ruling power.

The other main type of nationalism that Gellner identifies is the "Western liberal" or "Risorgimento" type of nationalism exemplified by the efforts of Mazzini, Cavour and Victor Emmanuel to bring about the unification of Italy. In terms of Gellner's parsimonious theoretical categories, the difference with the "Hapsburg" case is that the subordinate group is deprived only of political power, and not of access to education and general culture. One way of putting it is that in the "Hapsburg" case the subject people can develop their national culture more fully only after political emancipation, whereas they have already achieved their full cultural identity in the "Risorgimento" case. This distinction therefore roughly corresponds to the well-known dichotomy proposed by John Plamenatz (1976) between "Western" and "Eastern" varieties of nationalism.

Although the leaders of nationalist movements may be perfectly sincere in the altruism of their motives, which in fact many of them demonstrate by risking execution and torture in the course of their struggles for independence, once in power they become dispensers of patronage on a lavish scale. Positions once reserved for the alien ruling elite are now occupied by fellow nationals, and additional opportunities are opened up by new "nation-building" activities. Typically it is

the intelligentsia among the subject nations that are the beneficiaries of the new dispensation. Middle-class jobs in the public sector for French-Canadians, in replacement of English-Canadians, is the major outcome of nationalism in Quebec, in the refreshingly cynical interpretation of the "economics of nationalism" put forward by Albert Breton (1964). Gellner also is sardonically aware of this point, in his parable of how Ruritania obtained independence from the Empire of Megalomania (p. 61). Examples of massive and economically ruinous expansions of public sector employment are all too plentiful from recent experience in the Third World.

One implication of Gellner's model, which to my surprise does not seem to have been noted, is that it fails to predict any "nationalist" outcome for the "old continuous nations" of England and France and, for that matter, Japan. This is because over the long period of this internal development these states and nations were able to forge a relatively homogeneous cultural identity, in Gellner's sense, and so in his view there could not be such a thing as "old industrial country" nationalism. Nationalism therefore becomes exclusively an "ideology of delayed industrialization," in the sense of Alexander Gerschenkron (1962), associated with a movement against an alien ruling elite.

But is there really no such thing as English, French or Japanese nationalism? The French, after all, are generally regarded as having "invented" nationalism during the course of

the French Revolution and to have exported it at the points of the bayonets of their armies to the rest of Europe. The existence of Japanese nationalism would certainly not be doubted by anyone who experienced the Second World War in the Far East, and was it really in a "fit of absence of mind" that Britain acquired her empire as Gellner (p. 42) implies, even generalizing the idea from Britain to all of Europe?[3/]

It seems to me to be a severe defect of Gellner's approach that he adopts, in common with much of nineteenth century evolutionary type of thinking, a view of history in which the collective units being studied (societies, states, nations) are all lined up on parallel tracks with the trains leaving at successive dates. What is missing (except for the implicit spread of "industrial" technology) is any interaction between the units in either conflict or co-operation. While I have little else in common with the view of Immanuel Wallerstein (1974), I share completely his insistence that it is necessary to study nations interacting within a global system to make proper sense of the modern world. I see nationalism emerging from the process of internal integration and unification, which combined political, social and cultural factors such as language and religion, in the "old continuous states" of France, Spain and England, together with their national rivalry over commerce and overseas possessions inaugurated by the voyages of discovery. In other words I would date the emergence of nationalism to the age of

Mercantilism rather than to the spread of the Industrial Revolution to Central and Southern Europe, a difference of more than two centuries.[4]

As Schumpeter (1951, p. 211) says, "Nationalism is affirmative awareness of national character, together with an aggressive spirit of superiority. It arose from the autocratic state." The competing states in early modern Western Europe, engaged simultaneously in the "internal colonialism" of absorbing border areas and fighting each other overseas for access to the riches of the New World, each developed both spontaneously and by design complex interlocking myths of national identity to support them in the execution of these activities. While much of this activity was focused on the glorification of the monarchs, particularly Elizabeth I and Louis XIV, the extolling of the nation was inseparable from that of the rulers. As many have argued it was this element of incessant competition between the industrial units of the European state system in the early modern period that might account for the "rise of the West" as compared with the agrarian empires of the East.[5] In Northern and Eastern Europe also it is possible to link the emergence of national consciousness in Poland, Denmark, Sweden and Russia to their struggles over control of the Baltic trade. Again, strong monarchs such as Gustavus Adolphus and Peter the Great were much involved in the shaping of these images of national identity.[6]

The element of what George Orwell (1945, p. 412) calls "competitive prestige", inseparably associated with the idea of nationalism, also appears to have played a major role in the drive for German unification in the nineteenth century. In terms of Gellner's model it is not clear why there should have been any German nationalism at all. It is true that they were divided into thirty-nine states in the German Confederation devised by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, but the rulers were in every case German. The movement was therefore essentially for unity rather than "independence" from alien domination. What exercised German nationalists was that the division of the nation into so many states put it at a disadvantage with respect to its European rivals, the French in the West and the Russians in the East. This "competitive" factor was significant in the Italian case as well, even though there was foreign domination present in some parts of Italy.

The problems of nationalism in the world today fall into three categories:

(i) Movements for autonomy and even secession by ethnically or culturally distinct regions in advanced industrial countries, such as Quebec in Canada, the Basques and the Catalans in Spain, and Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales in Great Britain.

(ii) The break-up of the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia into component republics on the basis of distinct ethnic and cultural identity.

(iii)   Ethnic tensions and clashes in developing countries such as the conflict between the Buddhist Sinhalese and the Hindu Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The rest of this paper is devoted to examining each of these problems in the light of the approaches considered earlier.

III.

The first set of issues raise the question of why they arise in the first place. In advanced industrial countries which all of them are (with the possible exception of Spain) economic development and "modernization" should by now have welded the different communities together into a homogeneous national consciousness. Regional concerns always arise, of course, but why can they not be settled within a single state, with a federal structure if necessary?

Gellner's answer is that it is not only the level and extent of development that matters but whether or not it is "uneven." Systematically under-achieving groups in Canada, say, could not have a focal point for their discontent to rally around if they share the language, religion and other cultural accoutrements of the majority of their fellow citizens. If, however, a substantial proportion of some culturally identifiable group, French-speaking Roman Catholics, who moreover are concentrated in a particular region, Quebec, feel themselves to be denied full equality with their fellow citizens then we have an instance for an outbreak of a nationalist movement within

Gellner's model. Of course, the intellectuals who lead the
movement can "do well by doing good" for their community, as in
Breton's model which, as we have seen, is fully compatible with
Gellner's more general formulation.

The claim by Gellner (1979, p. 275) that the model
can account for Northern Ireland is more doubtful. It is true
that the Catholics can be considered an underprivileged group,
but it does not seem plausible to regard this factor as being
responsible for the extraordinary violence and bitterness
associated with the nationalist movement. Better jobs and
prospects for the Catholics would not assuage the long and
tragic history of Irish relations with the English state that
is the underlying cause, which only complete British withdrawal
could assuage.

Gellner (1979, p. 276) quite frankly admits, however,
that his model does not fit the case of Scotland. Here one
cannot argue that the inhabitants of the region are systematic-
ally disadvantaged relative to the rest of Britain. How then
to account for the phenomenon of Scottish nationalism? While
there are certainly enough examples of violent repression such
as the massacre of Glencoe in the past, it does not appear that
Scottish nationalism has the same roots as the Irish, since
relations were peaceful after the Jacobite rising of 1745.
Scots were active and successful participants in British
developments for a long time before the modern revival of
nationalist impulses.[2/]

What seems to be involved in the Scottish case, and perhaps that of the Basques and Catalans as well, is national- ism as a collective consumer good, that a group demands as a means of overcoming the sterile homogeneity of contemporary culture. All are fluent in the dominant community's language, so that the desire for a revival of Gaelic is not related to economic performance but is rather in the nature of a luxury public good that the group desires to consume. The emphasis here is not on nationalism as a rationalization for a policy of middle class jobs for members of the group as in the case of Breton's model. Rather it is on manifestations of the group's cultural identity through architecture, monuments, literature, dress, music and so on, which they fear will not be catered for sufficiently under existing political arrangements.[8/]

Such feelings by themselves may be insufficient to generate sufficient separatist sentiment unless reinforced by memories of historical oppression as in the Irish and French- Canadian cases. What may reinforce it is whether or not the region is a net contributor or recipient in relation to the national budget. In the case of Quebec, which is a net recipient, the center can use transfers as a bargaining chip to preserve unity. In the case of Scotland, the North Sea oil was a factor in the opposite direction. The unwillingness to continue sustained transfers to other regions, as in the case of the Lombard League in Northern Italy, is a good indicator of the erosion of the sense of national identity. There is also

of course a strong "free rider" element in many of the seces-
sion movements, since they are well aware that defense and
other public goods in most cases cannot be effectively withheld
from them by the rest of the country in the event of separation.

IV.

When the Bolsheviks inherited the Russian empire they
were faced with the difficult problem of preserving the
revolution in a vast multiethnic territory that had only been
held together by force. They were ready to do the same but
their rule had at least nominally to be reconciled with their
adherence to the principle of national autonomy for all
peoples. They adopted a federal structure in which territorial
divisions corresponded to ethnic divisions. The structure thus
appeared to be one in which the different nationalities were
joined together in a genuinely participatory way. As it turned
out, however, this was merely a front for a sophisticated
system of "imperial" rule from the center, with the hegemonic
entity not being the Russian monarchy or even the Russian
republic itself but the Party. The ruling elite in each
republic was appointed and controlled by the centrally
organized Party, with a bias in favor of the titular
nationality of each republic, an interesting contrast to the
usual imperial practice of appointing outsiders to administer
provinces. Since these officials were creatures of the center,
however, without any local power base, the essential principle
was preserved. With access to higher education carefully

controlled, this also ensured that the local intelligentsias were co-opted into the system since the Party offered the only "career open to talent." Any attempt at independent ethnic organization was suppressed ruthlessly.

This Soviet nationality policy thus served both as the means of implementing the centrally determined plan in each region as well as a method of controlling the potentially troublesome ethnic elites. Movements of population from one republic to another were strictly regulated by an internal passport system. The policy worked remarkably well during the expansionary phase of Soviet development when massive investments under forced draft brought significant returns despite the waste and inefficiency. As development faltered, however, the system could only be propped up by resource transfers from more productive to poorer regions.

Thus, although Marxism, in common with liberalism and other Enlightenment doctrines, anticipated a "withering away" of ethnicity in the process of development, the Soviet system actually preserved and intensified nationality as an organizational principle. As the discipline of the center began to break down in attempts at reform, each republic had to look out for itself. Since the ruling elites reflected the dominant nationalities in each republic it is not surprising that one solution to the problem of increasing scarcity was harsh discrimination against local minorities, such as that of the Uzbeks against the Meshketian Turks or the Georgians against

the Ossetians. Conflicts between neighboring republics also broke out over disputed territory, such as that between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave, and over access to water and grazing lands in the Central Asian republics.

The breakdown of the center, in the absence of any intermediate associations of a "civil society", had the effect of "turning nationalities into political parties" as Victor Zaslavsky (1992) points out. This "ethnic mobilization" did not lead to demands for separation and independence in the Caucasus and Central Asia since these republics were net recipients of transfers from the center. The Baltic republics and Ukraine, however, on whose "surplus" the center was drawing, moved in the direction of breaking away. As Zaslavsky (p. 114) puts it, the former Soviet Union was "a state which unites a Norway and a Pakistan" (which is probably unfair both to Norway and to Pakistan), and was therefore not viable in the absence of centralized dictatorship.

The bloodshed and intolerance associated with the eruption of ethnic tensions in the Southern and Eastern republics fed the strongly negative image of nationalism as a destructive atavistic force by Western observers and governments. Two incongruous heirs of the Enlightenment disdain for the politics of ethnicity, Eric Hobsbawm (1990) and George Bush, both denounced what the latter referred to in his speech at Kiev as "suicidal nationalism".

Zaslavsky and many other writers say that this negative attitude towards nationalism in Europe and the United States, while justified for the Caucasus and Central Asia, is unfair and misguided in relation to the more "Western" or "European" nationalities, such as the Baltic peoples and Ukraine and Slovenia and Croatia in the former Yugoslavia with their higher stage of economic development in comparison to the other republics, and their Roman Catholic, Lutheran or Uniate religious traditions. The Slovenian philosopher Tomaz Mastnak (1992) eloquently defends the idea of the nation-state in relation to these cases, on the same grounds as those enthusiastically supported by Western liberals in the nineteenth century with respect to the Greek, Italian and other independence movements. He argues that the West, by delaying recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, encouraged Slobodan Milosevic and the Serbs to go on the rampage, thus making "Balkan tribalism" a self-fulfilling prophecy.

These are difficult and controversial issues. On the question of recognition it is very likely that it was <u>too</u> <u>early</u> recognition of Croatia and Slovenia that precipitated the horrifying "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia.[2] There are also very legitimate questions about the commitment to democracy of the mostly Communist leadership in these "Western" breakaway states and their treatment of minorities within their borders. The substantial Russian minorities in the Baltic states and Ukraine pose a particularly acute problem. The fact that Milosevic has

apparently gotten away with his annexations in Bosnia cannot fail to tempt Yeltsin's successors, whoever they may be, to intervene in the Baltic states and Ukraine.

V.

The discussion of nationalism in the Third World must unfortunately be particularly brief and confined to South and South East Asia. Here once again nationalism can be seen as the response of the diverse local cultures and peoples to modernization within a colonial framework, much along the lines of the Gellner model. The existence of high religions and the memory of powerful indigenous kingdoms, only recently overthrown, facilitated the growth of nationalist ideology by Western-educated elites. Unity was made possible between ethnically and linguistically diverse subject peoples by their common opposition to colonial rule, with the language and ideas of the imperial powers providing the means for concerted resistance. In a process greatly accelerated by the Second World War, and the Japanese occupation of South East Asia, several newly independent states emerged.

Even before the colonial powers left, however, the ethnic and religious tensions between the local populations erupted violently, most notably in the separation of British India between India and Pakistan in 1947. India, with its huge population and extreme linguistic and religious diversity, is and will long continue to be a fascinating laboratory experiment in the saga of nationalism and the nation-state.

Hugh Seton-Watson (1977, p. 296) asks a good question: "Is India a multilingual nation or a multinational state?" Despite powerful centrifugal forces such as the Sikhs in the Punjab and the Tamils in the south, it would seem that the countervailing forces of economic development and the cultural unity of the huge and rapidly growing middle class spread all over the country are more likely to prevail in the end. Films and TV are other influences that have integrating power at less educated levels of the population. The commitment of Nehru and the first generation of Congress leaders to the "secular" character of their new polity was unswerving and their legacy might be strong enough to resist the temptation of Hindu hegemony, or so at least one hopes, despite the destruction of the mosque at Ayodhya.

A prominent feature of economic development in South East Asia during the colonial period was the role of Indians and Chinese who migrated into the area in response to the opportunities opened up by the expansion of primary exports. These communities mainly were involved in wholesale and retail trade, along with the provision of credit in rural areas. After independence the Chinese communities in Thailand, Indonesia and particularly Malaysia entered vigorously into the wider range of activities that became open to them in manufacturing, commerce and finance. Integration with the dominant ethnic group was easy in Buddhist Thailand but tensions were much more severe in the Muslim societies of

Malaysia and Indonesia, particularly the former where the two populations are not too far apart in size. In both societies, however, the ruling elites have successfully contained ethnic hostility without discouraging the vivifying enterprise of the Chinese community which, in combination with development strategies that emphasize foreign investment and exports, has brought a sustained rise not only in per capita income but also the share of it accruing to the non-Chinese majority. Control of the state by the Malay-dominated UMNO in Malaysia and the Javanese-dominated army in Indonesia assures sufficient redistribution from local Chinese and foreign businesses to satisfy the Muslim majority people in each case.

There are many reasons to doubt, however, whether the situation will remain stable in the long run. For one thing, the present arrangement has resulted in extensive corruption and highly unequal shares within the Muslim majority in each of these societies. Dissent is contained by tight political control in what are essentially one-party systems. Any opening to a more participatory system carries with it the possibility that the discontent of the masses will be tapped by fundamentalist Islamic groups, as has already happened in the case of Algeria. The combination of a social revolution against a corrupt ruling elite, together with a xenophobic reaction against the wealthy local Chinese would be a powerfully disruptive force. Thus there is a painful dilemma in these

cases, between the possibility of democracy on the one hand and
ethnic strife on the other.

The example of Sri Lanka is a chilling reminder of
what can happen. This abundantly endowed island had a highly
literate population and advanced social services, together with
a genuine parliamentary democracy. There were many close
historical links between the Buddhist Sinhalese and the Hindu
Tamils, who lived together peacefully in the colonial era and
in the first years of independence. Once the Pandora's box of
Buddhist Sinhalese xenophobia was opened by S.W.R.D.
Bandaranaike however, in the course of competing for political
power, the island became doomed to the all-consuming fury of
ethnic strife in which it is still engulfed, as perceptively
analyzed and documented by Tambiah (1986).

VI.

In concluding these notes on the congruence, or lack
of it, between state and nation, I would like to cite the
opinions of two eminent Victorians of widely divergent views.
John Stuart Mill (1861, p. 309) declared "Where the sentiment
of nationality exists in any force, there is a _prima facie_ case
for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same
government, and a government _to themselves apart_" (my italics).
He goes on to add, however, that "Free institutions are next to
impossible in a country made up of different nationalities."
Thus, he rejects the nostalgia often expressed in many quarters
for the good old days of the old empires when different peoples

went about their business peacefully under the shelter of an alien ruling class. Mill was a severe critic of the empires of his day, advocating independence for nations that met his high standards of capacity for representative institutions. The dilemma comes when peoples are so intertwined that the "one nation - one state" principle becomes impossible to apply while at the same time the legitimacy of the center has broken down.

Unlike Mill, Lord Acton (1862, p. 150) believed that "The combination of different nations in one state is as necessary a condition of civilized life as the combination of men in society." He had a highly idealized view of the Hapsburg Empire, lauding its apparent success in uniting a wide diversity of nations at different stages of development by a system of mutual checks and balances that maintained the effective liberty of each component. In a state based on a single dominant nationality he says (p. 156) that "The greatest adversary of the rights of nationality is the modern theory of nationality." By making the state and the nation commensurate with each other in theory, it reduces practically to a subject condition all other nationalities that may be within the boundary. It cannot admit them to an equality with the ruling nation which constitutes the state, because the state would then cease to be national, which would be a contradiction of the principle of its existence."

On this subject it is unfortunately Acton, rather than the optimistic Mill, who ought to have the last word.

<u>1</u> On the concept of a nation as an "imagined community", see the influential work of Benedict Anderson (1983).

<u>2</u> See, however, the important new study by Linda Colley (1992) who argues that a "British" nation was "invented", à la Anderson, between 1707 and 1837, as a result of Protestantism, war and empire, in a manner that transcended, without blending or fusing, the constituent English, Welsh and Scottish national identities.

<u>3</u> Linda Colley's book, cited earlier, is a convincing refutation of this view in the case of Britain.

<u>4</u> See once again the work of Colley, and for the Elizabethan roots of English nationalism the interesting new study by Helgerson (1992).

<u>5</u> See Findlay (1992) for a brief survey of these issues, with references.

<u>6</u> See Kirby (1990).

<u>7</u> Particularly in the army and the empire, as Colley stresses.

<u>8</u> Colley argues that the formerly unifying "British" identity no longer serves a functional purpose, with the cessation of war and the loss of empire, thus allowing the old Scottish and Welsh identities to assert themselves once again.

<u>9</u> See Glenny (1992, p. 179) for this view.

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