

**EXPRESSIONS OF NATIONHOOD:  
NATIONAL SYMBOLS AND CEREMONIES  
IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The central themes of this thesis are to highlight the importance of national symbols and ceremonies in the formation of nations and national identities, and examine how they contribute to the expressions of nationhood. The research has been conducted by means of a systematic investigation of national symbols and ceremonies, analysed as an integral part of identity-making, maintenance and change. The focus is on the contemporary European nations, and conclusions have been drawn with regard to their symbolism and ceremonies. The overall study has been complemented by three case studies; of Britain, France, Norway, with Germany as an analytical counter-case. Throughout this thesis evidence will be provided to the effect that national symbols and ceremonies express deeper aspects and meanings of the nation, and function as integrative and/or divisive forces. Moreover, national symbols and ceremonies form a central part of a 'secular' religion which provides anchorage in a dynamic world. National symbols and ceremonies also have an effect upon the community they represent; that is, they raise collective consciousness of 'who we are' and 'where we are from'. Finally, it has been argued that nations cannot be dated in a precise manner since they come into being by stages, marked by the adoption of national symbols, such as the national flag and the national day. These stages have been linked to three main symbolic regimes (termed 'old', 'modern' and 'new') and understood as a function of national independence and continuity, the implication being that the whole process of nation building forms a complex that is constituted along a continuum of re-discovery and invention.

*To my parents with love*

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Gabriella Elgenius  
London School of Economics & Political Science, 2005





*Liberty Leading the People*

Painted by Eugène Delacroix, 1830  
(The Louvre, Paris)

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONHOOD

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#### 1.1 The Symbolic versus the Real World

Scholars and the public alike often oppose symbolism and the real world, implying that symbolism of various kinds is above all decorative and of secondary importance to the real world of politics and economics. For most modernist theories of nationalism, for example, symbols belong to the world of myths and legends and are of marginal importance. I wish to argue to the contrary: symbolism is, as far as nationhood is concerned, as important as economic and political factors. We may remind ourselves of the many serious conflicts that have been fought throughout history over Jerusalem or, on a lesser scale, of the disagreements in France over the right to wear a Sikh turban or a Muslim headscarf. A related court-case was heard in Britain about a similar matter<sup>1</sup>.

The ongoing symbolic battles to alter city names have throughout history been a legacy of the change of political and religious regimes. Thus, after the Ottoman conquest in 1453 marking the end of the Eastern Roman Empire, Constantinople became Istanbul, and, as a result, Hagia Sofia became a mosque. More recently, St. Petersburg (in 1917 called Petrograd) was given the name Leningrad in 1924 to mark the victory of the Bolsheviks over the Provisional Government. The city retrieved the name of St.

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<sup>1</sup> The Appeal Court judge ruled that a schoolgirl had unlawfully been excluded from school for wearing a traditional Muslim 'jilbab'. The judge called for more guidance for schools on complying with the Human Rights Act. The Guardian, "Muslim pupil wins religious dress ruling", 2 March, 2005, See also Wyatt, "French headscarf ban opens rifts", 11 February, 2004

Petersburg in 1991, with the shift away from Communism as the dominant ideology<sup>2</sup>. A similar example is Tsaritsyn, founded in 1589, which became Stalingrad for the period 1925-61 and has been known as Volgograd since 1961.

As an illuminating example outside Europe we find a new battleground of names in Vietnam during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, referring to Vietnamese provinces, districts, cities and towns, streets and institutions. Many places have been known by three or more names during this period and we can appropriately speak of a 'war of names' bearing witness to the political struggles and to the renegotiations of nationhood and its symbolic expressions. Attempts have been made to erase the French colonial past by replacing all French names except those of Albert Calmette, Marie Curie, Louis Pasteur and Alexandre Yersin, whose scientific contributions are acknowledged. The League for the Independence of Vietnam (the Viet Minh) and its influence did not go unchallenged and from 1956 onwards, new Vietnamese names were allocated in the South in an attempt to erase some of the Viet Minh's anti-French exploits from popular memory. Moreover, American nicknames established during the Vietnam War (which went on until 1975) were replaced after the formal reunification in 1976. As an illustration we find that the victorious North Vietnamese communists changed the name of the capital from Saigon to Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) in 1975 on the first day of their victory. The symbolic battle has indeed continued and the People's Committee, as

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<sup>2</sup> However, the region around St. Petersburg still bears the name Leningrad Oblast.

they set out to name 25 new streets in HCMC in 2000, also decided to rename another 152 streets whilst in the process.<sup>3</sup>

I was initially drawn to the subject of collective, and in particular national symbolism by the importance it played in World War Two in Nazi Germany but also in the victorious nations after the War. An example, rich in symbolism, is the Moscow Victory Parade on 24 June 1945, where altogether 12,000 soldiers participated, honouring the millions of soldiers who never returned. Each of the regiments paraded with thirty-six banners from the units that had most distinguished themselves. They had been commanded to bring to Moscow all the enemy German, Italian and other flags that they had captured. At a poignant point the music accompanying the military parade stopped and was replaced by a drum roll increasing in volume. A column carrying two hundred captured Nazi banners appeared. As it drew up to Lenin's Mausoleum in Red Square, each rank made a sharp right turn and a soldier flung his Nazi banner to the ground at the steps of the Mausoleum. The Victory Parade was carefully documented and photographs subsequently appeared in countless Soviet textbooks and journals. The most publicised scene was the one of the contemptuous throwing down of the Nazi banners and standards, their eagles and swastikas crashing to the ground.<sup>4</sup> The imagery represented a new icon to worship – the people's triumph over fascism – but was equally a glorification of the Soviet Union, its leader and military power.

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<sup>3</sup> Florence & Jealous, *Vietnam*. 2003: 17-31, 432

<sup>4</sup> Clayton, "The Moscow Victory Parade". 1995: 3-7

In addition, the more recent revival of national symbolism in Eastern Europe, following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, drew my attention to the ‘symbolic battles’ being fought within the new nations once under the influence of the Soviet Union. The symbolic regeneration or renegotiation after 1989 produced new national symbols, flags, emblems, anthems; and new ceremonies and national days were chosen in order to celebrate the emerging nations – a course, at times, long and complicated. For many of these nations it had also been a long process to gain independence, and in many cases the new flag became the symbol of this struggle. The Baltic States, for instance, had been able to adopt their national flags after World War One on gaining their independence from Tsarist Russia, before being forced to introduce communist symbols upon being incorporated into the Soviet Union – that is, the Red Flag with the ‘hammer and sickle’ emblem and its Soviet Republic variations. Their national flags were readopted before the Baltic States officially proclaimed their independence 1990-91, and the Soviet emblems, associated with the deportation or execution of thousands of Estonians, Lithuanians and Latvians by Stalin, were immediately removed.<sup>5</sup> Similarly we find that the symbol of the 1989 revolution in the German Democratic Republic, leading to the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989, was in fact the Flag with the communist symbol cut out of it. Crowds in Bulgaria and Romania employed the same kind of symbolism.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lithuania's flag was officially adopted on 20 March, 1989, the Latvian flag on 27 February, 1990, and the Estonian flag on 7 August, 1990. Lithuania declared itself independent in 1990, whereas Latvia and Estonia proclaimed independence in 1991. The Singing Revolution in 1988 ought to be mentioned as an unprecedented protest against the Soviet Regime, when two million people made up a living chain on the Vilnius-Riga-Tallinn road measuring 600km in length. Understanding Global Issues, *Flags of Europe: Their history and Symbolism*. 1994:1

<sup>6</sup> Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging – Journeys into the New Nationalisms*. 1993

Moreover, Croatia revived the 'Šahovnica' as its flag in 1990 before proclaiming itself independent in 1991. This horizontal tricolour (red, white and blue) with a red and white chequered shield was not only a traditional Croat national emblem, but also the emblem used by the fascist World War Two regime, which led the Serbs to claim that the 'Ustaša' had returned<sup>7</sup>. In 1998, too, a complicated situation arose when Bosnia-Herzegovina was to choose a new flag defining its recently established sovereignty. Eventually, after a long process of negotiation, the United Nations High Representative imposed the design that had received the most votes in the Bosnian parliament.<sup>8</sup>

We also find that new regimes are quick to erase previous celebrations and establish new ones, as an essential part of the process of renewing national identities. This is a phenomenon witnessed at the fall of Saddam's regime in Iraq. The first decision made by the interim council, established in July 2003, was to abolish all previous holidays. The new Iraqi national day on 9 April was adopted as a celebration of Saddam's ousting. Moreover, the decision was taken on the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the revolution that annihilated the Hashemite monarchy - an occasion celebrated by all Iraqi regimes. Another example of the renegotiation of nationhood is the unexpected flag debate in Israel in 2005. The government, allegedly being unhappy with the existing flag as "the symbol of an aggressive, uncompromising Israel"<sup>9</sup>, opened a competition for a new

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<sup>7</sup> Ignatieff, 1993:18

<sup>8</sup> The flag of Bosnia-Herzegovina will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. Poels, "Bosnia and Herzegovina: A new 'neutral' flag", *The Flagmaster*, No. 089, 1998: 9-12; "The 1998 Flag change, Proposals from the Westerndorp Commission", FOTW [Flags of The World Website], <http://www.flaginst.demon.co.uk/fibosnia.htm>; "The Law on the Flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina, adopted by the Office of the High Representatives, Sarajevo", FOTW, <http://fotw.digibel.be/flags/ba-law.html>, 1998; "Bosnia and Herzegovina: Flags proposed upon Independence", FOTW, <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/ba-prop.html>

<sup>9</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, "Plan for softer look to Israel flag". 25 March, 2005:3

one. The winning entry of the competition was a pale blue flag displaying seven Stars of David in pastel shades around a modern version of the Menorah emblem. It is interesting to note that, among the short-listed contributions, was a design incorporating the Palestinian flag in the canton of the present flag.<sup>10</sup>

The illustrations above are just a few examples of how national symbols, of various kinds, are essential as expressions of nationhood and as such are able to ignite passions and conflicts of a larger, as well as a lesser, kind. As we shall see throughout this thesis, the adopted national symbols and ceremonies shape the formation of, and express the existence of, national identities. Within this context we note that all nations employ a package of symbolic elements in order to claim their distinctiveness and sovereignty, and we need to account for the reasons for this. In pursuing this argument, theories of collective symbolism will briefly be explored before approaches to national symbolism are investigated. The intention is to highlight a few main theoretical points in this introductory chapter as they lead into the overall argument. Where relevant, these theories will be investigated in greater detail elsewhere.

## **1.2 Theoretical departure: Symbolism and National Symbolism**

It has long been recognised that social life is an important repository of symbols, whether in the form of totems, golden ages, flags, heroes, icons, capitals, statues, war memorials or football teams, which are - at the core - symbolic markers of social groups. Symbols of a community provide short cuts to the collectivity it represents, and

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<sup>10</sup> The winning flag was designed by Mordecai Silver. Jewish Chronicle, "Plan for softer look to Israel flag", 25 March, 2005:3

symbolism is by nature self-referential, subjective and boundary-creating. The general theoretical framework can be made explicit by offering a brief account of two main contributions provided by Émile Durkheim's *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912)<sup>11</sup>, and Anthony Cohen's *The Symbolic Construction of Community* (1995).

## Symbolism

We may say that 'national phenomena', referring to Durkheim's statement on religion, "naturally order themselves into two fundamental categories: beliefs and rites".<sup>12</sup> On this basis, the general framework for the discussion can be outlined by looking at what he considered to be the elementary forms of social life. Even if Durkheim wrote little directly on national communities, his major contribution – which highlights 'religion' as a system of beliefs and practices of rites constituting the means by which the community constantly worships and reaffirms itself – is an essential building block in this area of research:

Thus there is something eternal in religion which is destined to survive all the particular symbols in which religious thought has successively enveloped itself. There can be no society which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas which make its unity and its personality. Now this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments; hence come ceremonies which do not differ from regular religious ceremonies, either in their object, the results which they produce, or the processes employed to attain these results.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Original version published in 1912. The translation *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), published in 1976 has mainly been used.

<sup>12</sup> Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*. 1991:92

<sup>13</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. 1976:427



Durkheim later defines this eternal ‘something’ as the ‘cult’ (a system of practices, rites and feasts) and the ‘faith’ (a system of ideas explaining the world).<sup>14</sup> Applying a Durkheimian approach to the modern world, the eternal dimension and characteristic of religion in other forms and guises can be revealed. Continuing in some ways the forms of the ritually active religious communities of the past, we can observe similarly active national communities. Giddens confirms this, stating that what is eternal in religion is not the religious beliefs themselves, but, rather, the ‘symbols of collective unity’, which in other circumstances and forms are used “in more secular vein as the celebration of political ideals”.<sup>15</sup> As we shall see many scholars agree with this view.<sup>16</sup> Thus, “social life, in all its aspects and in every period of its history, is made possible only by a vast symbolism”.<sup>17</sup> Durkheim raises the following question:

What essential difference is there between an assembly of Christians celebrating the principal dates of the life of Christ, or of Jews remembering the Exodus from Egypt or the promulgation of the decalogue, and a reunion of citizens commemorating the promulgation of a new moral or legal system or some great event in the national life?<sup>18</sup>

For Durkheim, the answer is that, as far as the form and function are concerned, there is no difference between religious and secular commemorations and ceremonies. Every society is a moral community in need of continuous moral remaking. In modern societies, affirmation of national values and identity takes place through national ceremonies and the use of national symbols. In line with this approach, and the

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<sup>14</sup> Durkheim, 1976: 427-429

<sup>15</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*. 1991: 207

<sup>16</sup> In order to pursue this research area similarities between religion and nationalism in terms of forms and functions have been highlighted. There are of course other relationships between religion and nationalism that deserve to be mentioned, as religious identity has proven to fuel national movements of independence. As emphasised e.g. by Martin in *A General Theory of Secularisation* (1978), religion is strengthened when fused with nationalism in resisting a foreign power (Poland), but weakened where imposed by a conquering power and associated with domination (Cuba).

<sup>17</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. 1976: 231

<sup>18</sup> Durkheim, 1976:427

statement that “a society’s symbols are determinants of its conduct”<sup>19</sup>, it will be suggested throughout this thesis that national symbols are expressions of nationhood and raise and reinforce awareness of the nation. In this capacity they constitute essential building blocks in the creation and maintenance of nations and national identities.

Whereas Durkheim points towards the integrative function of symbols and rituals, Cohen<sup>20</sup> stresses the symbolic construction of community being characterised by the appearance of commonality (a commonality of forms and ways of behaving) within the group, whose meanings may vary among the members. This is an important complement to the Durkheimian tradition and to this study. Cohen is concerned with the nature of community boundaries, which define the group and represent the communal sense of identity. Within this perspective, identity formation is primarily a matter of differentiation from others.<sup>21</sup>

According to Cohen, symbols express meaning, but they also give members of the community the possibility to create meaning. Since social boundaries are imprecise, they allow for varying associations and meanings for different members as well as outsiders.

Community is just such a boundary-expressing symbol. As a symbol, it is held in common by its members; but its meaning varies with its members’ unique orientations to it. In the face of variability of meaning, the consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols. The reality and efficacy of the community’s boundary - and,

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<sup>19</sup> Durkheim, 1976:274

<sup>20</sup> Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. 1995

<sup>21</sup> The boundary is the marker between communities as a whole, and not only between communities which wish to be distinguished from each other. For instance, administrative, statutory, physical (geographical), racial, linguistic or religious boundaries serve as markers of difference. Not all boundaries are necessarily so obvious as in the examples above nor are all their components. However, they all perform the same function in their capacity as categories of social knowledge.

therefore, of community itself - depends upon its symbolic construction and embellishment.<sup>22</sup>

Leaving the argument of manipulation and embellishment of communal symbolism aside for the moment, it ought to be emphasised, in line with Cohen that symbols do not impose a static meaning. Instead, they provide the means by which meaning can be created, and they render it possible for people to make sense of what they observe. The nationals<sup>23</sup> do not have the same understanding or experience of their community, nor the same attachment to its common body of symbols. Nevertheless, symbols, as categories of a kinship system, express social ideas and values in a way which allows for a common form to be retained and shared, whilst individual understanding is flexible, and attachment can be expressed without compromising individual beliefs and values. Symbols are effective precisely because they are imprecise and their meaning is 'subjective':

[...] the community itself and everything within it, conceptual as well as material, has a symbolic dimension [...] this dimension does not exist as some kind of consensus of sentiment. Rather, it exists as something for people 'to think with'. The symbols of community are mental constructs: they provide people with the means to make meaning. In doing so, they also provide them with the means to express the particular meanings which the community has for them.<sup>24</sup>

This does not mean that the interpretations of communal symbols are arbitrary. On the contrary, they are formed in line with the traditions of ideology, beliefs and culture of the community. Symbols act as vehicles to express and affirm the community they represent and do so by heightening people's awareness of boundaries in the interaction and ritualisation of their community. Rituals are expressions of communal identity and

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<sup>22</sup> Cohen, 1995: 15

<sup>23</sup> The term 'nationals' is used throughout this thesis to mean members of a national group, just as the concept of 'citizens' usually refers to members of a state.

reinforce the feeling of social location and the experience of belonging to a group, as expressed in carnivals, fiestas, fairs, saints' days, celebrations and commemorations. It is true that individuals participate in rituals for all sorts of reasons, but whatever their motivations, rituals have a prominent place in the repertoire of communal symbolism and constitute the means by which the community's boundaries are affirmed and reinforced.

Boundary-making rituals are 'multi-referential' and 'multi-vocal' as they reveal themselves on a variety of levels to the members of a community.<sup>25</sup> On the one hand, they communicate with the group as a whole and deliver a message about the relation of the group to others; and on the other hand, they simultaneously communicate directly with individuals about their relation to their group and to the world outside it. It is clear that boundaries are both oppositional and relational.<sup>26</sup> Since symbolising the past together with the present constitutes one of the most powerful resources in the process of boundary making, it is also necessary to emphasise that rituals constitute emotionally charged moments for the members of the collectivity who are reminded who they are and why they belong together.

Cohen's theoretical platform can be contrasted with that of Durkheim's, as the former proposes that "rather than thinking of community as an *integrating* mechanism it should be regarded instead as an *aggregating* device. In this approach, then, the *commonality*

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<sup>24</sup> Cohen, 1995:19

<sup>25</sup> For these concepts see Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*. 1967; Turner, *The Ritual Process*. 1969

<sup>26</sup> Cohen, 1995:59

which is found in community need not be a uniformity”.<sup>27</sup> This is an important point, as modern industrialised and multicultural nations are far from ‘uniform’ or ‘cohesive’. A sense of commonality, produced through common symbols and ceremonies, does not necessarily produce integration or cohesion, but the reality of difference is transformed into an appearance of similarity. However, it is necessary to point out that communities and boundaries are not only built upon an imagined (fictitious or unreal) appearance of similarity. They are, at least to some extent, based on some form of integration and commonality. As regards rituals, Cohen claims that the importance of symbolic expressions of community increases when the geo-social boundaries of a group have been undermined, blurred or weakened. This conclusion follows from the author’s claim that the symbolic construction of community is in need of manipulation and embellishment in order to be effective or to be sustained. This valid point further refines the Durkheimian perspective. However symbols are not necessarily embellished or manipulated under these circumstances, as will be seen in Chapter Four. We must not forget that the nation constitutes a moral community, and if the ‘moral boundaries’ are undermined an absence of symbols and ceremonials may be found.

### National Symbolism

The recent surge of works on nationalism and ethnicity has, on the whole, neglected the field of symbolism and rituals. The academic debate has particularly focused on three themes: (a) What is the nation - a reality or an abstraction that is the result of a long historical process or a construction? (b) When is the nation - a ‘natural’ and universal phenomenon or a feature of the modern world? (c) How to define the nation - as a

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<sup>27</sup> Cohen. 1995: 20

socio-cultural or as a political unit? These questions above address fundamentally the relationship between 'nationalism' and the 'nation', the discussion revolving to a high degree around how these concepts are related in terms of causality: do 'nations' exist without nationalism and nationalism without nations, or are nations to be understood as an inevitable component of nationalism? Without entering into any argument about the merits or importance of this or that approach to nations and nationalism, the relative neglect of rites and symbols is unfortunate, for several reasons. The limited research in the field of national symbolism and mythology has mainly been carried out on a theoretical level with very few contributions in the form of case-studies. An empirical discourse would therefore provide a useful contribution to the debates about nationhood and identity formation. Thus, empirical curiosity is an important reason for this research: the symbolic and ritual manifestations of Europe are little known, and no investigation into the symbolic patterns of nationhood in Europe has been undertaken. In particular, any systematic knowledge about the variety and pattern of national expressions is lacking. The second reason is that social science has good grounds for believing, in line with the Durkheimian approach, that collective ceremonies and symbols have something important to tell us about the character, the self-identity and the collective consciousness of the collectivity - in this case the nation. Thirdly, and as we shall see in the application of the empirical material provided, symbols and ceremonies are central components of nationhood.

This raises the question of how we are to understand the key concepts of 'nation'<sup>28</sup>, 'nationhood', 'nation-state', 'nationalism' and 'national symbolism'. The 'nation' will refer to a social group and its sense of shared cultural and/or political experiences (such as history, religion, language, a political agenda to attain recognition), but also to its overall adherence to a complex of symbols that constitutes the boundaries between 'us' and 'them'<sup>29</sup>. From this it follows that 'nationhood' is the expression of cultural, political and symbolic elements of the nation. However, although nationhood rests on various degrees of a feeling of shared cultural and political experiences, it does always include an adherence to a complex of symbols and myths specifically relating to the

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<sup>28</sup> Attempts at defining the concept of 'nation' have been singularly unsuccessful according to Seton-Watson (*Nations and States - An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*. 1977), who doubts whether it is feasible to achieve a so-called "scientific definition" in this particular case. Hobsbawm (*The Invention of Tradition*. 1992:5-6) points out that definitions trying to establish a certain set of criteria in order to grasp the notion of 'nation' are bound to fail, since exceptions always can be found due to the capricious nature of the term and to the futility of trying to accommodate a constantly changing conception into a 'framework of permanence and universality'. Authors such as Gellner (*Nations and Nationalism*. 1993) and Anderson (*Imagined Communities*.1991), in order to avoid a narrow statement, have designed their definitions to include merely a general notion of the term, instead of focusing on a set of characteristics, and according to them, limiting attributes. Several scholars highlight the 'self-definitional' dimension of nationhood. In the writings of Anderson, this is discussed in terms of the people and its imagination of others as fellow nationals. Hobsbawm's statement that any people who considers itself as a nation constitutes one; or Connor's (*Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding*. 1994) idea of the nation being 'self-defined' also exemplifies this argument. Snyder (*Encyclopedia of Nationalism*. 1990) points out that as a result of the terminological confusion and disagreements of the contents of the term 'nation' "*the editors of several important encyclopedias have omitted the word 'nation' altogether*" (Snyder. 1990:230) Attempts to ascertain wherein this confusion lies have been various; for instance, Anderson (1991:5-7) points to three paradoxes concerning the phenomena of the 'nation', 'nationality' and 'nationalism' that stretch along a continuum with contrasting perspectives: (1) 'nation' as an objective reality of modern society vs. a subjective antiquity; (2) 'nationality' as a socio-cultural phenomenon required by everyone vs. the meaning of 'Greek' nationality as sui generis i.e. for a selected group only; (3) 'nationalism' as a political power vs. its philosophical poverty. For an encompassing debate on the difficulty of defining these concepts see also Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, 1994; Connor, "When is the Nation", 1990:92; Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*. 2001; Smith, *Nationalism & Modernism*. 1998; Hutchinson & Smith, (eds.), *Nationalism*. 1994

<sup>29</sup> It is not the aim of this thesis to define the nation, and the discussion about the key-concept is provided as a 'working definition' only. The 'nation' is here distinguished from an 'ethnic group', having some form of political agenda for recognition, which does not necessarily have to mean that it constitutes a political force to attain autonomy or independence. Recognition can be sought afterwards, not only in political forms but also in social or cultural terms, as in the case of Wales. Although nationhood today rests on a varied degree of feeling of shared cultural and political experiences, it always includes an adherence to a complex of symbols and myths.

‘nation’ as a community. The traditional idea of the homogenous nation-state, that is the union of one people and one state (in terms of a sovereign political, judicial and military structure) has more or less ceased to exist in an increasingly multicultural and global world. However the nation-state, as traditionally defined, has not ceased to exist as an aspiration, and therefore today’s nation-states as a rule are states in which one dominant culture is promoted.<sup>30</sup> Generally speaking, one may see the nation as the bearer of identity and the state as providing the framework for that identity. Furthermore, nationalism is understood as a phenomenon operating on three levels: as an ideology stating that the world should be divided into nations; as a political movement for the attainment of autonomy or independence; and as a language of symbolism<sup>31</sup>. It is the symbolic dimension of nationalism – connecting its three levels – that will be explored in this thesis. ‘National symbolism’ is simply set apart from other forms of group symbolism by its references to the ‘nation’, its history, and its claims to distinctiveness and sovereignty.

Although in many ways neglected, the symbolic construction of nationhood is not a new discovery. In pursuing the argument, we turn to the symbolic dimensions of nationhood as laid out by authors such as George Mosse: *The Nationalization of the Masses - Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (1975), Eric Hobsbawm: *The Invention of Tradition* (1992), Anthony D. Smith: *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986) and *Chosen Peoples:*

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<sup>30</sup> See Guibernau, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*. 1996

<sup>31</sup> The discussion of ‘nationalism’ is based on Smith’s conceptualisation as he highlights, and rightly so, that the expression of nationalism is multifaceted and varied. See e.g. Smith, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*. 2001; Smith, *Nationalism & Modernism*. 1998



*Sacred Sources of National Identity* (2003), and John Armstrong: *Nations Before Nationalism* (1982).

The ground-breaking work of George Mosse<sup>32</sup> on the nationalisation of the masses in Germany and on the rise of national consciousness through the ‘new’ form of politics, based on the 18<sup>th</sup> century concept of popular sovereignty and manifested as the ‘general will’, has been particularly relevant for this study. When, during the 18th century, the former allegiances to royal dynasties began to decline, the masses of the population emerged as a political force. According to Mosse, the worship of royalty was hereby transformed into worship of the nation, into conditions in which the people worshipped themselves. The new political style gave a tangible form to a previously shapeless mass by transmitting to it a collective national identity, providing a feeling of belonging through national symbols, rites, festivals and songs. Nationalism as the new political style became, in reality, a secularised religion. It supplied an objectification of the ‘general will’, based upon the awakening national consciousness and formalised by the idea of citizenship. As a consequence, the members of the community started to act as one people, a unified force. Mosse argues: “the aesthetics of politics was the force which linked myths, symbols, and the feeling of the masses; it was a sense of beauty and form that determined the nature of the new political style.”<sup>33</sup> Nationalism, thereby progressed in newly created ‘sacred places’ in the ceremonial style and symbolic manner of Christianity, where hopes and fears are controlled and acted out within

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<sup>32</sup> Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich*. 1975; See also Mosse, *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Nationalism*. 1993. It is important to mention that the concept of ‘secular’ religion

ceremonial and liturgical ways <sup>34</sup> Through the new politics, public manifestations of national identity were introduced and national monuments were erected: “permanent symbols helped to condition the population to the new politics: not only holy flames, flags and songs but, above all, national monuments in stone and mortar. The national monuments as a means of self-expression served to anchor the national myths and symbols in the consciousness of the people”.<sup>35</sup> In short, it was through the paraphernalia of a fully worked-out liturgy, symbols and mass actions that the nation became integrated into the daily life of the people.

Pursuing the argument, the core of Hobsbawm’s<sup>36</sup> theoretical framework and his conceptual tool of ‘invented tradition’ have provided an interesting departure. This concept refers to a “set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.”<sup>37</sup> New traditions were invented when new forms of expressing identity and cohesion, new methods of establishing bonds of loyalty, and a new way of legitimising social institutions were required. Hobsbawm suggests that the human need for continuity located the creation of inventions in an era of rapid social transformations.

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has been challenged by Weber who argued that nationalism was a surrogate religion, a substitute for religion.

<sup>33</sup> Mosse, 1975:20

<sup>34</sup> Mosse, 1975: 207-216

<sup>35</sup> Mosse, 1975:8

<sup>36</sup> Hobsbawm & Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. 1992

<sup>37</sup> Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992:1

From Hobsbawm's point of view, references to the past as claimed by nationalists are based on deliberately created and formalised ritual and symbolic complexes that are central for the formation of nations.<sup>38</sup> Hobsbawm identifies two main symbolic languages through which the nation 'communicates' with its members. These two idioms are manifested in buildings, monuments and statues as 'traditional allegory and symbolism', and in an extension of official and ritual spaces as a 'theatrical idiom', for example in ceremonies, demonstrations and mass sporting occasions.

Hobsbawm's approach to national symbolism is highly significant as it highlights the political use and importance of national symbols and ceremonies. However, the concept of 'invented tradition', and the reference to the period of mass-production of traditions in Europe 1870-1914, are simplifications when considering the complexity of national symbolism. This will be demonstrated in Chapters Two and Four with the help of material gathered in the two encompassing surveys on European Flags and National Days.

The importance of a 'living past' in the process of nation formation constitutes an essential aspect of the works of several scholars. Smith<sup>39</sup> highlights, above all the use of history and historical space or poetic landscape in the formation and maintenance of

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<sup>38</sup> The overall framework for 'invented traditions', according to Hobsbawm, is the state, as a tool in the hands of formal rulers and dominant groups. The widespread process of electoral democracy, which institutionalised mass participation, also led to the discovery of the potency of 'irrational' elements. Controlling national symbolism and traditions therefore became a state goal, in order to maintain social order.

<sup>39</sup> Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. 1986: 174-208; Smith, *National Identity*. 1991; Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*. 1995; Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*. 2003

national identity. According to Smith there are two main ways by which a modern community locates itself, namely through the 'poetic use of landscapes' and the 'use of history', notably with reference to 'golden ages'. The landscape roots the community in a distinctive terrain and provides a site for mythologies. References to a 'golden age' have two main characteristics: to establish a link between the founding fathers and the divinity of the nation with specific references to sagas and myths of heroism. These factors, especially the cult of heroism and genius, symbolise the uniqueness of the community and thereby create a distinct historical identity for the members. Central to these myths is the idea of linear development, that is birth, growth, maturity, decline and, most important in this context, the rebirth of the nation. Bearing this in mind, one can see that history 'directs' consciousness and provides people with a sense of distinctiveness.<sup>40</sup> Hence, the ideological and mental direction of the national unit helps us to locate and define ourselves with regard to the past, present and future. The nostalgia for the past and the need for renewal must be related to the waning of old religious beliefs in modern society and to the need for new measures of immortality through posterity. In line with this argument, Smith highlights that "the nation is best seen as a community of faith and as a sacred communion"<sup>41</sup>, which also well describes the core of the national community.

Smith emphasises that the language of symbolism expressed through national ceremonies, customs and rituals is of paramount importance in understanding the fundamental mechanisms forming national consciousness and maintaining national

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<sup>40</sup> Smith, "Art and Nationalism in Europe". 1993: 64-80

<sup>41</sup> Smith, 2003: 24

identity. Moreover, the nature of national symbolism is twofold. The public form incorporates the officially recognised symbols such as the national flag, the emblem and the anthem. The other dimension exists in a more private sphere, and communicates through cultural artefacts such as (war) monuments, statues, buildings and architecture; and these will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five in the context of the cult of the fallen as one example of national symbolism in Europe.

The ethno-symbolist approach, as represented by Smith, owes much to Armstrong's illuminating concept of the 'myth-symbol-complex'<sup>42</sup>. This complex of myths and symbols constitutes the 'core' of nations-to-be and is the foundation on which identification of any particular 'ethnie' is based. It constitutes the starting-point for the intelligentsia in their efforts to motivate the community to take part in the process of nation-building.

Armstrong asserts that collective boundaries, in the form of symbolic border guards<sup>43</sup>, are created over the *longue durée*, which is particularly relevant in the context of this thesis. Ethnic boundaries, as one form of collective boundaries, constitute the means by which the web of myths and symbols becomes effective. Armstrong writes: "to an extraordinary degree ethnic symbolic communication is communication over the *longue durée*, between the dead and the living. Here, as in other facets of ethnic identity, the persistence of the symbol is more significant than its point of origin in the past."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism*. 1982

<sup>43</sup> Armstrong acknowledges, in particular, the influence of sacred religious symbols in the construction of ethnic symbolic border guards.

<sup>44</sup> Armstrong, 1982:8

Myths and symbols can be found in art, architecture and insignia and are, as a general rule, characterised by persistence in time and diffusion in space. They have persisted because they make group members aware of their 'common fate'.<sup>45</sup>

The symbolic elements produced by verbal and non-verbal language – art, music and graphic symbols – are incorporated into this mythic structure, which subsequently turns its components into 'mythomoteurs' that systematise, legitimise and define identity in relation to the specific polity. Within the creation of identities, the process of differentiating oneself from others is once again emphasised. As many would agree, Armstrong argues that groups define themselves not by reference to their own characteristics but by exclusion, that is by comparison to 'strangers'.<sup>46</sup> In other words, the creation of symbolic border guards – guarding the boundaries against outsiders – constitutes the basis for the important differentiating process and provides an essential element in the identification with the in-group.

The importance of history and the glorification of the past in the present, as discussed in the works of Mosse, Hobsbawm, Smith and Armstrong, are emphasised by these scholars because of the past's capacity to fuel the process of identity-formation. Moreover, these factors provide the overall framework for the symbolic expressions

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<sup>45</sup> Armstrong, 1982:164-165

<sup>46</sup> Armstrong also identifies a second important boundary mechanism, namely the category of 'class'. Armstrong takes an instrumentalist stance by incorporating in this category the phenomena of elites manipulating the lower classes, lacking the skills of the high-culture to resist the myths and symbols imposed on them. As indicated, the boundaries of ethnic collectivities are different from those of class categories. In Armstrong's opinion, the phenomenon that ought to be highlighted in this context is the different degree of persistence between these boundaries. See Armstrong, 1982

and construction of nations. The past is rooted in the land and the territory,<sup>47</sup> and anchors the nation by creating an illusion of eternity and a sense of unity in the present. A national past also provides nations with a sense of moral direction or destiny.

A few other works deserve to be mentioned: Pierre Nora's *Realms of Memory* (1984-92)<sup>48</sup>, Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities - Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1991) and Göran Therborn's *European Modernity and Beyond* (1995). Nora's volumes on the symbolic construction of the French past constitute one of the most impressive outputs of current historiography. Several case-studies in Volume three, *Symbols* (1998) have been pertinent for this study. Anderson's 'ghostly imaginings' will also be discussed further on in the context of the cult of the fallen soldier. In connection with European days of commemoration, Therborn has identified the foci of collective identity among Europeans as being those of Christianity, war and class. And summarising the heart of the matter he states: "A collective identity is not just an identity held in common in their souls by an aggregate of individuals. As a rule it is also a public thing, manifested in and sustained by public rituals."<sup>49</sup>

In what follows, we concern ourselves less with the processes of construction of nations, or the role of invention and imagination than with exploring a variety of cases and accounting for similarities and differences. Instead of entering the fray about what

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<sup>47</sup> The discipline of archaeology has been used in this context. Although the past is highly selective and a real continuity cannot be proven, archaeology has been used to link the notion of the nation to a certain territory. Sørensen (*Gender Archaeology*. 2000), for instance, addresses the national use of archaeology in 19<sup>th</sup> century Denmark.

<sup>48</sup> Original title *Les lieux de mémoire. La République* (vol. 1) was published in 1984, and *Les France* (vol. 3) in 1992.

nations and nationalisms are and why they have arisen, the principal aim is to look upon national symbols and ceremonies as one instance of a more general social process, of identity construction and maintenance, and to identify the pattern of the symbolism of the European nations.

### **1.3 Hypotheses and Arguments**

Within this perspective of this thesis three crucial moments in the national identity process stand out: self-reference – who and what we are; differentiation – of us from others; and recognition – the struggle for affirmation and against the negation of others. This perspective has given rise to the following two research questions: What is the role of national symbols and ceremonies in the formation of nations and national identities? To what extent do national symbols and ceremonies contribute to the maintenance of nations and to the expressions of nationhood? In order to answer these questions the following arguments are put forward as hypotheses and explored in this thesis:

- National symbols and ceremonies express deeper aspects and meanings of the nation.
- National symbols and ceremonies provide comfort and anchorage in an ever-changing world.
- National symbols and ceremonies have an effect upon the community they represent, that is, they raise collective consciousness of ‘who we are’ and ‘where we are from’.
- National symbols and ceremonies vary in age because the nations they represent vary in ‘age’, the latter being a function of national independence and continuity.

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<sup>49</sup> Therborn, *European Modernity and Beyond - The Trajectory of European Societies 1945-2000*. 1995: 223



Firstly, we may argue that national symbols and ceremonies express the deeper meanings of the nation; as they mirror the nation and we see the expressions of nationness through them, we grasp how the nation wishes to represent itself through its officially sanctioned symbolism. In other words, the nation is visible through its symbols (flags, anthems, emblems), ceremonies (national days, sporting events), monuments (memorials, buildings, national museums), the land itself (landscape), its borders (insiders and outsiders) and the capital city. This assumption is illustrated by the fact that all nations, in order to be accepted internationally, must have a certain number of characteristics. The nation is usually known by six essential elements: a name, a capital city, clearly defined borders, a national flag, a national anthem and a national day.

The name of the nation expresses self-definition, self-awareness and identification of the group. Further a nation's borders constitute the boundaries and defences around the homeland, and the capital city symbolises the historic centre for that homeland as well as the centre for its main institutions. Moreover, every nation needs a main sign to represent it. The national flag is for this reason not only a piece of cloth fluttering in the wind, it is a sign of self-expression, and a claim of sovereignty or the wish to attain sovereignty. Flags, generally overlooked in the nation formation process, are also essential symbols to rally around. National anthems, much like flags, symbolise the nation and its collective self-celebration and unisonance. National days are occasions when national symbols are activated. They are the repeated annual occasions when the nation remembers its founding myth or celebrates its symbolic birthday. The national

day constitutes, for this reason, a re-enactment of memory, a self-celebration and an illustration, like flags and anthems, of how the nation honours itself as a state.

Secondly, and in connection to what has been said above, we shall argue that national symbols and ceremonies provide comfort and anchorage in an unstable world. This means that they are reminders not only for nationalists, but also for other members of the community who, like members of religious communities in the past, can feel the security and comfort of certain things remaining constant during times of loss and change. The reiteration and ritualisation of national ceremonies and usage of symbols constitute barriers against the threat of the unknown, chaos and rapid change. A repeated national ‘myth-symbol’ complex continues to assure us of that which is familiar and secures thereby a feeling of permanence with regard to the community.

Thirdly, national symbols and ceremonies have an effect upon the community they represent. National symbols shape and maintain the nation as they tend to raise collective consciousness. The chief symbols and ceremonies of the nation are able to ignite passions by their presence and visibility. Through these passions they create collective self-awareness, but they may not necessarily create unity and cohesion. Acting out national memory links the symbols with the ceremonies and raises awareness of belonging, which, in turn, reinforces identity.

Fourthly, given the claims stated above, it may also be argued that national symbols and ceremonies vary in terms of chronology, and can be identified in accordance with

three main 'symbolic regimes'. There are 'old', 'modern' and 'new' national symbols (flags) and ceremonies (national days) because nations vary in 'age', in terms of continuity and independence.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, by dating the national symbols of Europe, a pattern of the different symbolic regimes emerges and of the approximate time when the European nations, in their contemporary form, appeared with an agenda on the national and international scene.

#### **1.4 Method and Outline**

To support the claims made above, a comparative approach will be used, both as regards the choice of empirical variables and as regards the choice of cases. A comparative and historical approach has been chosen, since national symbols and ceremonies rely on references to the past in order to justify the existence of the nation in the present. The past is, in other words, in the present. A comparative approach also allows for a study of the origins and the developments of national symbols and ceremonies, as well as for comparison between different periods and places.<sup>51</sup> To start with the variables; we saw earlier that the nation is known by a certain number of essential elements. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss all of them so we must narrow the focus considerably and restrict ourselves to examining two of the main elements: the national flag and the national day. This comparative approach consists of exploring national flags and national days, and drawing conclusions about their age, the cause of their development, their purpose and significance. The choice of variables is relatively straightforward. The national flag is the chief symbol of the nation, the

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<sup>50</sup> The categories of 'old', 'modern' and 'new' will be defined subsequently (see Chapters Two and Four).

symbol of its sovereignty as well as its distinctiveness. Moreover, there have been no previously published empirical comparisons of the role of flags as expressions of nationhood. As for national days, which manifest the existence and character of national identities, hardly any investigations – let alone comparisons – have been made.

The choice of cases is a little more complicated. It involves a two-stage process. Firstly, in order to assess the role of symbols and ceremonies in nationhood, and in order to generalise the conclusions, one has to focus on the nations of Europe as a whole and to compare the main ‘statistics’ regarding their flags and their national days. Secondly, in order to reach a deeper understanding of the rôle played by national symbols and ceremonies in the formation and maintenance of national identities, these surveys have been followed with an in-depth cross-case analysis of France, Britain and Norway. These cases are explored because they represent different paths to nationhood, in ways that are clarified later. Generally speaking, these cases have been selected on the basis that they together illustrate the complexity of the nation building process in their symbolism and ceremonial variety and expression. Moreover, in order to make the differences and similarities between the cases visible, Germany is chosen as a counter case of national symbolism in the investigation of national day ceremonies. This has been done, not only because of Germany’s intrinsic importance in European history, but in order to illustrate how a fractured path towards nationhood (historically as well as in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) has manifested itself in the lack of persistence of its national symbols and ceremonies.

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<sup>51</sup> Llobera, “Historical and comparative research”, 1998:72-81

To support this argument, historical as well as contemporary, and firsthand as well as secondary sources, have been used. Data have been collected from among the following origins: sociological case studies, works of historiography, heraldic and numismatic literature, architectural works, catalogues, key documents for national identities, publications by ministries of foreign affairs and of defence, official state protocols as well as documents by non-governmental organisations, for example the British Legion, and so forth. Interviews and visual material gathered from libraries, museums, archives, chronicles, cultural exhibitions, tourist offices, embassies, recordings of national commemorations and national day ceremonies, city plans, maps and photographs of monuments, buildings, squares and statues have also been used.

Where the information is either unavailable or out of date, the two main complementary methods have been employed: informant interviews, interviews with experts such as academics, specialists and public officials, and direct observations. Informant interviews with public relation officers at the embassies in London have been most useful, when it has been a matter of cross-checking and updating data. This is particularly necessary with the nations of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Yugoslavia. In order to obtain more specialised information from primary as well as from secondary sources, which otherwise would be very difficult to acquire, the archives of the Flag Institute in Chester proved most useful. The large amount of information collected about the national flags and national days of Europe has been categorised and presented in the tables in Chapters Two and Four.

Before we turn to the outline of this thesis, it is important to emphasise what the thesis is not going to cover. Theoretically speaking, the concepts of ‘collective’ and ‘social memory’<sup>52</sup>, although related to expressions of nationhood, fall outside the scope of this study. The subject of ‘collective memory’ is simply too vast to include. The interesting works on another related topic, national images and narratives in European art and literature<sup>53</sup>, have been consulted, but these aspects have not been examined in this study. It is not the aim of this thesis to generate a new theory as it departs from the existing analytical perspectives of a modified Durkheimian approach. However, the application of a different type of empirical material, as well as the vast amount material in itself, are original features of this thesis. The aim is to contribute to deciphering the complexity of the subject of national symbolism as well as to highlighting new conclusions within what has so far been a neglected research area.

Empirically speaking, not all expressions of nationhood will be assessed. Instead, the focus will be on the national flag and the national day ceremony. One may ask why national anthems have not been considered instead of national days. The reason for this is that the national day as the main national ceremony is a ritual space in which symbolism of different kinds (flag, anthem, and so on) is activated and where its use is most evident and effective. By analysing national days we see how symbols are used in their ritualised context. Indeed, a section is dedicated to “Ceremonial Symbolism”,

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<sup>52</sup> The works of Halbwachs (*On Collective Memory*. 1992), Connerton (*How Societies Remember*. 1990), Fentress & Wickham (*Social Memory*. 1992), and Nora (*Realms of Memory*. 1996) and others have been considered but their theoretical frameworks have been excluded as they fall outside the scope of this thesis.

<sup>53</sup> Bhabha, *Nation and Narrative*. 1990; Smith, “Art and Nationalism in Europe”. 1993: 64-80; Smith, *Patriotism and Neo-Classicism: The 'Historical Revival' in French and English Painting and Sculpture*,

which explores the use of, for example, national anthems, emblems and costumes. Besides, some work has already been done on national anthems by Nettle: *National Anthems* (1967), by Mosse: "National Anthems: The Nation Militant" (1993) and by Maugendre: *L'Europe des Hymnes* (1996). Nor have national names, borders and capitals been examined, although the lay-out of the capital centre in two of the special cases is considered as it provides the site for the annual celebrations and commemorations.<sup>54</sup>

This study is limited to coverage of Europe. However, to provide an in-depth account of the flags and national days of all the European nations is beyond the scope of the study, given their vast number. Instead, the principal features of the main national symbol, the national flag, and the main national ceremony, the national day, are accounted for, so that the foundations of a symbolic pattern can be outlined. As regards the cases, these are chosen as representatives in terms of their symbolism and ceremonial variety, character and age. While the account of the present national flags and days does not pretend to be comprehensive, the thematic approach to the case studies seeks to cover the main issues related to their origins, developments and characteristics. As for the national days, the participation of the members of the community varies according to changing national circumstances; and the expressions of nationhood, for obvious reasons, are constantly being re-defined. Furthermore, depending on how early the national flag and national day were introduced, some cases

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1746-1800. 1987; Smith "The Suffering Hero: Belisarius and Oedipus in Late Eighteenth-Century French and British Art". 1989:634-40

<sup>54</sup> Other expressions of nationhood, such as emblems, stamps, seals, and coins, are also significant, but it has not been possible to investigate them within this context.

will need to be explored over a longer period of time than others. As regards regional differences, it would be an impossible task to consider the celebrations of the national day in all parts of a given country. This thesis is, therefore, limited to examine the main national celebration. Moreover, other festivities<sup>55</sup>, regional rather than national in character, may be of importance but have been excluded unless they form part of the main national day.

Finally, this is not a study of the effects ceremonies have on different national groups divided by sex, age, class, region, ethnicity or religion. Much research still needs to be done about the reaction of different groups to these symbols and ceremonies and about their contribution to the official version of nationhood. It seems that there have been no concrete studies raising these questions, but they lie beyond the scope of this study, due to the limitations in time and space.

## Outline

The thesis is organised in such a way that the descriptive chapters on national flags (Chapter Two) and national ceremonies (Chapter Four) precede two theoretical chapters (Chapters Three and Five) in which the empirical material is developed and analysed in detail. This introductory chapter has set out to clarify the theoretical and empirical points of departure. Chapter Two considers the role of flags throughout history, and the emergence of the 'national flag'. A survey of all European national flags, their origins and developments is presented and categorised in three tables in

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<sup>55</sup> Other festivities may include city and regional festivals (e.g. around the Rhine in Germany, and the Fiesta of San Fermin in Navarra with the running of the bulls in Pamplona). Dynastic and church festivals or sporting events are also beyond the scope of this thesis.



accordance with three 'symbolic regimes', distinguishing them as 'old', 'modern' or 'new' flags. The importance of the national flag as an essential expression of nationhood is further illustrated by the three case studies of Britain, France and Norway. Chapter Three seeks to answer the questions raised in Chapter Two, and explore the contexts in which flags appear and why flags became such important political symbols. Moreover, why flags manage to provoke feelings of love, awe and patriotism is considered. Different types of flags and national narratives displayed through the national flag are also identified.

The focus of Chapter Four is the concept of the 'national day' and its constituent elements. Four tables are presented as regards the origin, age, and character of the European national days in terms of 'old', 'modern' and 'new'. In order to grasp the complexity of ceremonial variety in Europe, 'Bastille Day' in France, 'Constitution Day' in Norway and 'Remembrance Sunday' in Britain are explored. A study of 'Unification Day' in Germany as a counter case is also included. The importance of collective ceremonies in the making and the maintaining of collectivities is further discussed in Chapter Five. Here, the links between collective identities and collective ceremonies are identified in their relation to the European national days.

In Chapter Six, the national flags and national days are examined together, in particular their dates of adoption, in order to demonstrate the complexity of the nation building process. As we will see, the 'age' of the symbolic regimes in Europe is a product of independence and continuity. Moreover, national symbolism is a measure of national

continuity, and considerable continuity characterises the national symbolism in Northern and Western Europe, though less so in Central and Eastern Europe. A consistent pattern is not to be found in Southern Europe.

## CHAPTER 2

### **NATIONAL SYMBOLS: THE EUROPEAN NATIONAL FLAGS AND CASE STUDIES**

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Chapter Two commences with an examination of early symbols in the light of the modern flag tradition, in order to illustrate how flags, as markers of identity, have become attached to national communities. Taking into consideration the time period encompassed by the investigation, it is necessary to be brief and account only for major developments leading to the emergence of the national flag. The underlying assumption that national flags have something to tell us about the properties of nation-states is reflected in a survey of the main European flags in the second part of this chapter. This contains information with regard to their origin, design, appearance, modifications and type. The complex process of nation-building will thereafter be illustrated by an examination of the establishment of the national flags of France, Britain and Norway. These cases have been chosen as they represent different paths to nationhood, which is explained in more detail further in this chapter (and also returned to in Chapters Four on national ceremonies). The flag is the image by which the nation-state projects itself, and an indicator of real events and of political change. The outcome of the classifications of ‘old’, ‘modern’ and ‘new’ flags will be analysed in Chapter Three, and together with the emergence of ‘national days’ in Chapter Six, as part of a general framework of national expression and nation formation.

Thus, the main objectives of Chapter Two are to demonstrate a link between pre-modern and national symbolism; provide an account of European national flags so that a pattern of symbolism can be established subsequently in Chapter Three; and

explore the process of nation building by the means of the development of the national flags in three case studies.

Symbols that indicate belonging to a community constitute a ubiquitous feature of social life and are not exclusive to nations. In the modern world, the nation's ancestors and particular qualities are commemorated via the flag as an object of worship and as an extension of a 'secular' form of divinity, comparable to the worship of totems and standards in earlier times. National flags are powerful symbols to rally around: they bind people to their community and glorify the nation. The flags constitute 'routinely familiar habits of language' and represent to people the ideology of nationalism in a world divided into nations.<sup>1</sup>

Whether 'national' symbols existed in pre-modern times depends naturally on whether we define the 'nation' as a pre-modern or a modern unit. If we understand the modern nation as having developed after the French Revolution with qualities of mass-participation in the political system and of citizenship we draw the conclusion that 'national' symbols did not exist in earlier times. This does not mean that pre-modern communities had no need to employ symbols in order to represent themselves and their societies. However, early symbolic devices were not indicative of nationality in its modern sense, and even if pre-modern loyalties did exist, it is premature to talk about nations in the Middle Ages. This is a matter neglected by the authors of vexillological literature such as Smith (*Flags through the Ages and Across the World*. 1975; *Prolegomena to the Study of Political Symbols*. 1969)<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*. 1995:93

<sup>2</sup> Accepting that it is difficult to find detailed historical descriptions of flag-related symbolism, the representational function of flags has primarily been investigated in the historical part of this chapter. Available sources on flags are of different age and quality. Some original sources on heraldry date

Crampton (*The World of Flags*. 1989; *The Complete Guide to Flags: Identifying and Understanding the Flags of the World*. 1992), Preble (*The Symbols, Standards, Flags, and Banners of Ancient and Modern Nations*. 1980), and Hulme (*Flags of the World; their History, Blazonry, and Associations*. 1915)

The national flag, as an expression of nationhood, appears as a symbolic statement with the ‘modern’ mass-participant nation of citizens, starting after the French Revolution and illustrating people’s desire to manifest a new kind of ‘similarity’ and ‘sameness’ and to participate in the political process. Thus, national flags emerge after being selected and established by nation-states, nations without states and states without nations. Elites in pursuit of state power play an essential role in the selection of the national flag. However, important symbols such as flags survive over time only with support from and resonance with the people, which will be demonstrated by the data provided in the tables on the European flags in this chapter. We must not forget that many aspects can be employed to define the nation: a distinctive culture, language, shared history and memories. But these variables can be the cause of empirical confusion as they vary from community to community and are difficult to date. This is why after 1789 the emergence of a mass-culture and political participation on a large scale become important factors in the emergence of the modern units that we know as ‘nations’.

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from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century whereas others are updated. Additionally, few scholarly attempts have been made to deal with flags in a sociological or historical context. For this reason, the reader will find that some sources of exceptional quality have been used frequently. Whitney Smith’s study of 1969 and his opus of 1975 belong to this category: with their historical and geographical approach they are so far the most comprehensive study of flags. With regard to recent developments of flag-related matters, the Flags of the World Website [FOTW] supplies a bank of articles. FOTW is a member of FIAV (Fédération Internationale des Associations Vexillologiques).

For the purpose of this chapter we may say that “the certain definition of a nation is adherence of its people to common symbols – and first and foremost a national flag.”<sup>3</sup> Although incomplete this is an interesting assertion as it emphasises the earlier given criterion of ‘mass-participation’. The flags adopted prior to 1789 were not ‘national’ in the modern sense, but through their mere existence we are able to understand the gradual process of nation-formation and the existence of pre-modern loyalties. In line with the definition of the ‘nation’ provided in Chapter One, a crucial factor manifesting the abstract notion of ‘nationhood’ is the adherence to a tangible common ‘myth-symbol complex’. Whatever variables cause the particular formation of a national community – language, religion, history, memories, a political agenda for recognition, economic integration or combinations of these elements - the national flag reflects the supremacy of the national ideal. It is from this perspective that we approach the subject of this chapter.

Once in use, the effectiveness of the flag is connected to the simplistic and abstract representation of the complex notion of nationhood, without compromising individual beliefs. It is for this reason that every nation uses the flag as a direct and obvious way of proclaiming its distinctiveness and independence. The national flag refers through its mere existence to claims of historical continuity and established rights to a designated territory, passed from one generation to another since time immemorial. In other words, claims of a national past and heritage attached to a historic ancestral territory cannot be dismissed in the modern world. We witnessed the conflicts of the Balkans resulting from such claims in the 1990s, also expressed through newly established national flags.

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Flags throughout The World and Across the Ages*. 1975:54

## 2.1 The Use of Flags throughout History

The historical section of this chapter follows a rough chronological order. That is to say, references will be made to the period before the birth of Christ, to the Christian as well as the non-Christian world before the Crusades (until 1100), to the latter part of the Middle Ages (1100-1500), and to the early modern period (1500-1800). The modern period from 1800 onwards is dealt with in more detail, and a more elaborate discussion follows with regard to development of the flags of Britain, France and Norway.

It is only recently that the history and symbolism of flags, or ‘vexillology’, has become a separate scientific study<sup>4</sup>. The vexillum<sup>5</sup>, a Roman cavalry flag or standard<sup>6</sup>, was used by a ‘vexillation’ or detachment from the legion. As opposed to the Roman *aquila* (the metal eagle), also a symbol of identification, the soldier could carry the vexillum in one hand whilst on horseback. The term ‘vexilloid’ is used to refer to other solid objects on poles, examples of which could be feathers, animal figures and signs of the zodiac.<sup>7</sup> These objects fulfilled the same function as a flag: they were employed as signs of identification for an assembly or a military unit. Early vexilloids were also used in order to identify and mark the presence of a notable person and to communicate the attributes of a person or a god. The first references made in literature about the usage of this kind date back to 550 BC in Ancient Egypt, where graphic symbolic representations of the deities were

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<sup>4</sup> Vexillology has been a separate study since the 1960s. The term was coined by Dr. Whitney Smith, whose extensive work in this field was mentioned earlier.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Vexillum’ is a diminutive of *velum*, ‘sail’, and coins and sculptures confirm that *vexilla* were ‘little sails’ and consequently flag-like. FOTW [Flags of the World Website], “Etymology of Vexillological terminology”, <http://fotw.digibel.be/flags/flagetym.html>, 1999

<sup>6</sup> A standard can refer to (1) a flag around which people rally in battle, (2) a flag based on a heraldic shield, (3) a flag representing a military unit, or (4) the personal flag of a monarch, president or other high official. Hulme, *Flags of the World; their History, blazonry, and associations*. 1915:14

displayed in form of vexilloids, such as the hawk of Horus or the throne of Isis.<sup>8</sup> All the early vexilloids, in use all over the world, are linked in their function to modern flags (as signs of identification), although they represented groups much smaller than modern nations. In their capacity as totems, they served as the centre of attention for a given cult, and acted thereby as reminders of identity. As a consequence, 'flags' in this form, in use a very long time ago, may be distinguished by their plasticity, omnipresence and the fact that they could be seen by great numbers of people simultaneously.<sup>9</sup>

### Vexilliods in Antiquity

The oldest vexilloid still in existence is a metal standard with an eagle from Persia, dating to 3000 BC. There is, however, evidence that this type of symbolism existed earlier, for example on pre-dynastic Egyptian pottery portraying vexilloids on ships as early as 3500 BC, although the exact date for the first vexilloids is impossible to provide<sup>10</sup>. Later, when Egypt was united around 3200 BC, an Egyptian depiction represented King Narmer preceded by the vexilloid standards of three nomes (provinces), as he advanced on his decapitated enemies, in a representation carved in stone.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, from 1200 BC onwards, a standard was already in use to indicate a division of the army in Egypt. The Egyptians were also the first to use streamers (long, narrow flags) on flagpoles for decorative purposes in the precincts of the temples.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Understanding Global Issues, Flags of Europe: Their history and Symbolism*. 1994:13

<sup>8</sup> Crampton, *The World of Flags: A Pictorial History*. 1992

<sup>9</sup> Smith, 1975: Chapter 1

<sup>10</sup> One has to take anachronistic mistakes into account, i.e. the chronological misplacing of persons, events, objects or customs.

<sup>11</sup> The representation described was carved on a macehead and dates from the pre-dynastic period. See Smith, 1975: Chapter 1; Crampton, 1992; 111

<sup>12</sup> Crampton, 1992



The political, religious and military functions performed by the Roman vexilloids are found in many earlier and contemporary civilisations. As regards the earlier civilisations, astral symbols with religious significance appeared in Indian and Mesopotamian cultures around 2000 BC. Two emblems that have continued to be reproduced throughout time, the Babylonian stele of *Ur Nammu* and a representation of the crescent moon and the rayed star of *Shamash* (the sun-god) have been dated to this time, 2100 BC. The standards of the Anatolian civilisation (2000-1000 BC) were linked to stags, whereas the Assyrians until 640 BC used standards with bulls and the emblem of *Assur*, the divine archer of the Sun (a winged disc). Later, the Persians in 500-400 BC used the winged disc in a more elaborate form. A sun and moon standard is recorded (how remains unknown) in Phoenicia from 500 BC onwards, an era during which a signal flag marked the ship of an admiral or communicated a command to attack. In fact, the Phoenicians were the first to put flag staffs on their ships, bearing the crescent and disc of the moon goddess *Astarte* and with decorative streamers. The vexilloids from Persia that date back to 400-300 BC display a totemic animal at the top of the pole or the kind of cloth flags that had distinctive emblems of eagles, falcons, suns, stars, or geometric designs.<sup>13</sup>

One of the earliest kinds of emblematic identification can be found among the native peoples of America and Australia, in their use of the totem pole. As the chief symbol of the clan or family, the totem specified the clan's ancestry in terms of the qualities and traits of a particular animal or plant. The totem was such a powerful symbol that the clan believed that its own powers were derived directly from it. In

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<sup>13</sup> Smith, 1975: 38ff; Crampton, 1992:111-116



this way, vexilloids acquired a 'sacred' meaning early on, although the totemic system varied greatly from one society to another.<sup>14</sup>

The vexilloids of the Roman Empire are interesting because the Romans were the first to systematise the use of standards in order to mark units of an army. However, they were not employed in one exclusive way; several vexilloids were sanctioned at the same time not only as emblems of identification but also as weapons.<sup>15</sup> The Romans used different kinds of animals on vexillological standards until 104 BC, after which the eagle became the sole standard of the Roman legions. Each legion had an eagle, whereas different kinds of detached units also carried a vexillum (among the first vexilloids in fabric). The eagle standard would sometimes be thrown into the ranks of the enemy, after which the commander of the legion would order his men to recapture it. The two most famous Roman vexilloids reproduced either the image of the emperor or the eagle. The eagle could appear together with the symbol of Jupiter, the patron of Rome, or with a thunderbolt; symbolism that was thought to add strength and vision to 'Rome'.<sup>16</sup> The magnificent grand parades of ancient Rome provided the context for the early vexilloids. Lavish parades with standards and soldiers in full battle dress served to compensate for a rather weak distribution of military resources and to impress the people, an example followed by other regimes in different places and periods. Within these triumphal processions, the eagle standards were honoured as 'sacred' objects symbolising Rome's divine mission. This impression was further reinforced by the parading of flags and regalia captured from vanquished peoples as proof of Roman conquest and success. In this

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<sup>14</sup> The totemic system varied as much as the theories trying to explain it. See e.g. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. 1976; Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion*. 1965: 48-77

<sup>15</sup> Smith, 1975:37

process, the vexilloids became associated with notions of honour and divinity, attributes indirectly transferred to the Empire as a divine extension of Rome.<sup>17</sup> Other examples of the sanctification of these standards were that the vexilloids of foreign troops, serving in the Roman army, had to be given official recognition within the sanctuary of the Roman Pantheon. 'Sacred' Roman vexilloids were also introduced into the Temple of Jerusalem, by order of Pilate in 26 AD, as a mark of dominance and authority.

The origin of the cloth flags has been scrutinised in many different eras and cultures, and as a result we find many answers<sup>18</sup>. The earliest depiction of a fabric flag is vaguely claimed to date back to 400 BC. It is painted on a wall in a Samnite colony in Paestum in Southern Italy.<sup>19</sup> This depiction lacks a distinct design although the shape of the flag itself bears a close resemblance to a modern one. The Chinese also used flags, as lateral cloth attachments to staffs, following the invention of silk farming. The development of sericulture around 3000 BC brought new possibilities of producing light, large, enduring and colourful (painted or dyed) flags that could be used outdoors. These flags were mainly known for their military use, but also appeared in temples and religious processions. One of the earliest cloth flags was also flown during the Egyptian Middle Kingdom around 2000 BC. It is not necessary to date the first flag, in this context, but it is interesting to see that flags were used by early civilisations and that the present pattern of flag symbolism has ancient roots.

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<sup>16</sup> Smith, 1975:34-36; Crampton, 1992:111-115

<sup>17</sup> Crampton, 1992: 111-115

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Smith, 1975: 34-37

<sup>19</sup> Crampton, 1992:111ff

The Romans, as far as we know, used two kinds of fabric flags, one with the image of the goddess of victory painted on it, and the other *the flammula*, consisting of red streamers attached to the spear, marking the presence of a general. Crampton (1992) derives this usage from that of the Greek *phoinikis* (a red cloak), which marked the commander of a ship, a practice later copied by the Romans. Another fabric flag used by the Christian Roman emperors was a ‘sacred’ standard called *labarum*, employed as early as 400 AD by the Roman Emperor Constantine.<sup>20</sup> The *labarum* was a Christian version of the Roman vexillum. It marked an evolution from the latter as it displayed a portrait of the Emperor and his family or other government officials, and atop the staff, the monogram of Christ (the Chi-Rho). The legend about its origin, as told by the 4<sup>th</sup> century historian Eusebius in *Life of Constantine*, has it that the emperor before the victory over Maxentius in 312 had seen a sign of the cross in the sky with the words *In hoc signo vinces*.<sup>21</sup>

Again we have to note that, although similar in some functions to modern flags, none of these devices was flown from flagpoles – they were all portable deities. In consequence flags in their modern sense were still to be invented. Nevertheless, flags are related to the units they represent, as signs of identification, whether flown in ancient or modern times.

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<sup>20</sup> The *labarum* itself is described as a jewelled square purple cloth hanging from the crossbar of a long gilded pike, and a golden wreath with the cross monogram was displayed on the top of the spear. The *labarum* has been dated thanks to the documentation of coins issued at Constantinople after Constantine’s victory over Licinus in 324. Hulme, 1915: 2-3, 51

<sup>21</sup> “In this sign thou shalt conquer”. Crampton, 1992: 111ff

## Banners and Flags in the Middle Ages

The Koran's injunction against representational art encouraged the development of flags in the Arab World. These relied heavily on abstract patterns and calligraphic inscriptions – often religious texts – in embroidery, appliqué or painting. Even before the rise of Islam, promulgated by Mohammed in Arabia, flags of black and white were used in the early part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. From what we know today, Mohammed (570-632) used one black and one white flag. The 'liwa' (black with a white border) is another flag connected with him. The Arab World developed the tradition of using specific colours and inscriptions for different dynasties and leaders. As dynasties followed one another, contrasting colours were used, in order to differentiate the ruling dynasty from its predecessors<sup>22</sup>. The Arab World contributed significantly to the modern flag tradition by inventing the cloth flags with greater adaptability. Their colours (and inscriptions) also illustrated a legendary affiliation and affirmation of a 'dominant ethos'.<sup>23</sup> Associating specific colours with dynasties and/or individual leaders reinforced a particular ethos of a political identity and later became the basis for all modern flags. In the case of the early Arab flags their colours were all chosen on the basis of legitimacy through association with Mohammed as the Prophet. Thus the main colours of the Muslim flags were selected on the basis of an affiliation to values and leaders.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> 'Red' was associated with the two caliphs (Arabic: 'chalifa', successors) Abu Bakr (initiating the office of the caliphate) and Umar. White flags were used by the Ummayyads in commemoration of Mohammed. The Abbassids, who transferred the capital from Damascus to Baghdad, chose the contrasting colour of black, with the justification that this was after all the true colour of Mohammed's flag. Subsequently the Fatimids selected green (the flag is called 'borda'), by tradition the colour of the cloak used by Mohammed. The so-called 'Secessionists' – the Kharijites – were represented by red, used earlier, and later also used by the Ottomans. Smith, 1975

<sup>23</sup> One example is the banner attributed to the Moorish State of Granada in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, which displayed the inscription *'There is no conqueror but God'* on a red background.

<sup>24</sup> An interesting difference can be noted with regard to the use of colours by the Chinese and later by the Arabs; whereas the Chinese identified every colour with a philosophical or religious concept, the Arabs associated specific colours with dynasties and individual leaders. Another interpretation of the Arab colours, from the last century, and based on the words of the poet Safi al-Din al-H'ily

In the West, flags were introduced during the Crusades, inspired by the pre-existing Arab military banners<sup>25</sup>, and derived from the struggles between Christians and Muslims.<sup>26</sup> In the Christian world the practice of bestowing banners previously blessed by the Pope became a tradition of high significance at this time and followed the ceremonial forms set by pre-Christian Rome. These banners were generally called ‘pallia’ and like the previously mentioned cloak of Mohammed, they were originally garments. It is interesting to note that *pallia* were dedicated to St. Augustine (354–430), Charlemagne (742-814), and William the Conqueror (1028-1087). The cloak of St. Martin was another garment that was turned into a flag, which later became a cult object of Frankish kings and even influenced the choice of blue as part of the modern French tricolour.<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile the power that finally led to the creation of the Mongol Empire arose in Asia. Many of the Mongol standards displayed a device, a ‘flaming trident’, reproducing the blades of a trident with flames surrounding them. The flag of the Khan himself consisted of nine yak-tails hanging from a rack of crossbars. After the conquest of China lateral flags were used, still with the horsetail and the flaming trident. The use of flags by the forces of Genghis Khan (ca 1155-1227) was significant for the development of a world-wide flag tradition in that a special flag, actually called ‘banner’, came to be connected with each regiment.<sup>28</sup>

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reads: “*White are our deeds, black our fields of battle; our pastures are green, but our swords are red with the blood of the enemy*”. Safi al-Din al-H’ily quoted by Smith, 1975:42

<sup>25</sup> A banner refers to (1) a cloth stretched between two anchor points bearing a slogan or (2) a flag with heraldic arms, or (3) a flag carried by a military unit. FOTW, “Glossary of Flag Terms”, <http://fotw.digibel.be/flags/flagglos.html>, 2000

<sup>26</sup> Understanding Global Issues, *Flags of Europe: Their history and Symbolism*. 1994:13; Smith, 1975

<sup>27</sup> Crampton, 1992:112

<sup>28</sup> Crampton, 1992:113

It is thus evident from the first cloth flags in the Arab, Asian and Christian worlds that the practise of flagging one's community, beliefs and purposes has been in use for a very long time, regardless of material substance.<sup>29</sup>

Vexillology has also been looked upon as a branch of heraldry<sup>30</sup> and many national flags, their colours and designs, have been influenced by preceding coats of arms which were originally used to identify soldiers on the battlefield.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, from the extension of heraldry to Christianity, in the use of arms on the seals of ecclesiastics, an early collective principle can be deduced. Seals from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onward were not necessarily used to identify individuals. Instead, they symbolised the body the ecclesiastics represented, in similar fashion to modern expressions of nations, cities or educational establishments. Similarities are also to be found in the ceremonial forms of the ritualistic tournaments in the Middle Ages - where coats of arms, livery colours<sup>32</sup> and badges<sup>33</sup> were displayed in a context of strength and distinction – and the competitive arenas of international sporting events.

The first badge used during the Crusades was the Cross, which could be worn as a garment on the chest or back of the warrior. The imperial war flag of the Holy Roman Empire (from 800 onwards) displayed a white cross on red, symbolising the holy cause in which the battle was fought.<sup>34</sup> As early as 1188 different colours were in use for crusaders from different regions, a distinction illuminating that

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<sup>29</sup> It is obviously impossible to provide a precise date of the first cloth flags since fabric flags have not been preserved from the Middle Ages. Smith, 1975:37-38ff

<sup>30</sup> In Woodcock & Robinson 'heraldry' is defined as the "systematic hereditary use of an arrangement of charges and devices on a shield". Heraldic devices and colours emerged in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century over a wide area of Europe. See Woodcock & Robinson (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry*. 1990:1

<sup>31</sup> Tenora, "Time to cut the umbilicus between heraldry and vexillology". *The Flag Man*,

<sup>32</sup> Livery colours are the main colours of the field (background) and of the principal charge (motive) of a coat of arms. Crampton, 1989:133

<sup>33</sup> A 'badge' is a distinctive emblem added to a flag or used on its own. Smith, 1975:13

differentiation based on pre-modern loyalties emerged very early. It was also decided in 1188, that King Philip Augustus of France was to have his own colours displayed on his cross flag (red cross on white), as were King Henry II of England (white cross on red) and Count Philip of Flanders (green cross on white). These colours were later reversed and, while the reason for this remains unclear, England embarked on what today is considered a continuous tradition of a red cross on white from 1277, whereas France displayed a white cross, first on a red, then on a blue flag. From this practice and time emerged the famous and significant cross flags, such as St. George's Cross (red cross on white), the Cross of St. Denis (a white cross on red) and the cross flag of the Teutonic Knights (black cross on white). The Crusader flag displaying a white cross on red, was originally used by Christians against the European 'pagans', and later became the flag employed by the Holy Roman Empire in battle.<sup>35</sup>

The influence of heraldry on modern flags has been substantial, and the effectiveness of the symbolism has been reproduced due to the simplicity, distinctiveness and originality of heraldic colours and designs. The first cross flags indicated primarily that the military operations of the crusaders were sanctioned by the Pope. However, it is clear that these flags gained territorial associations as time went by.

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<sup>34</sup> Smith, 1975; FOTW, "Denmark", <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/dk.html>, 2004

<sup>35</sup> Crampton, 1992: 111-115; Smith, 1975



## The Early Modern Flags

As regards the modern national flags, the oldest national flag – the Danish *Dannebrog* – from which all the other Scandinavian Cross flags have originated, can claim a direct link to the Crusader Cross. St. George's Cross of England, as one part of the modern Union Jack reflecting the political development of the United Kingdom, and the Swiss Cross may claim indirect links. Thus, the first known cloth flag (the cross-flag) in the Christian tradition constitutes an important link between, on the one hand, the earlier representation of mainly religiously sanctioned communities, and on the other the secular and national communities of our times. This form of representation has developed from religious (together with or via monarchical) representation to national symbolism.

Many modern national flags are also derived from the 'arms of dominion' (arms of the realm used by the ruler of empires, kingdoms, principalities and states) either in terms of being armorial flags<sup>36</sup> or displaying the livery colours of these arms, for example the flags of Austria, Spain, Poland, Sweden, Hungary, Malta, Belgium and Luxembourg. The heraldic tradition tied the ruling elites (nobility or other magnates) to a specific territory via the arms of dominion, and town flags were associated with 'local rights'. Thus, the hereditary principle of the heraldic coat of arms has, to some extent, been transferred to the national 'inheritance'. For example, a successful legend lies behind the creation of the Austrian flag (a tricolour with horizontal stripes of red-white-red) that found its present form with the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918. The legend has it that the red-white-red stripes have their origin in the Third Crusade of 1189-92 when Duke Leopold V of

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<sup>36</sup> An 'armorial flag' corresponds exactly to the shield of the coat of arms. Smith, 1975:13

Austria fought in the bloody Battle of Acre (Ptolemais) of 1191. The white stripe in the middle symbolises the only part of his costume that remained white and could be seen after his belt had been removed. Alternatively, the red and white colours came originally from the arms of Duke Frederick II of Austria in 1230 that depict the spread black eagle of the Holy Roman Empire with the shield of Austria's national colours (red and white) at its centre.

One sees, therefore, that several kinds of alternating symbolism indicated that various forms of loyalties existed before standardised measures were taken towards a more uniform mode of representation. For example, the use of the arms of dominion of England (the three lions) gradually became restricted so that it could be flown only by the monarchs or their appointed agents. This process started after the Crusades, after which the nobility had recognised it would never enjoy the same 'divine sanction' as the clergy, and insisted on maintaining their coats of arms and transforming these into a formal system restricting their usage. The systematisation of heraldic coats of arms became a matter for professional heralds whose task it was to establish the hereditary and personal nature of the arms. As the system was elaborated, it continued with specifications such as confirming the size of flags to rank.<sup>37</sup> With heraldry's loss of practical relevance on the battlefield and with the growth of new social classes, novel means of representation were needed to fill the void. The Cross of St George, originally seen as a less important flag, became as a result the flag to symbolise England, and the English trading companies started to use St. George as a basis for their own flags and in order to identify themselves at sea.

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<sup>37</sup> Smith, 1975: 44-46

The sharp ideological divisions (religious divisions, dynastic affairs, and pre-national claims) and the military encounters based on these in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries were reflected in the flags and banners carried by the troops. As a result, these new groupings came to be identified with certain colours, which provided the foundation for the elaboration of what was to become the ‘new’ tri- and bicolour flags, adopted by the revolutions preceding the modern nation-states a few centuries later. In times of constant warfare these colours, emerging from the crusader flags or the livery colours of individual monarchs and noblemen, gained more symbolic value and their attributed associations slowly became more national in character in terms of their associations with groups of ‘people’.<sup>38</sup> The banners and standards of the time, however, were not comparable to the flags of modern times in their usage, size or design, and did not represent a citizenry or a mass-participant body of ‘equals’. Notwithstanding, the early designs acted clearly as predecessors to the modern flags, as they symbolised pre-modern loyalties to specific rulers. The ‘people’ was still part of ‘smaller’ communities or corporations and was consequently represented through church banners and guild flags. In general we may conclude that the symbolic representation during the Middle Ages and the early modern period was still exclusive. Moreover, it operated on two different levels of society, which illustrates the lack of communication between the elite – the nobility

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<sup>38</sup> Smith (1975) illustrates how the Crusader Cross (red couped cross on white), originally adopted as a Christian symbol, influenced the development of three main streams of cross flags some of which were used in the Middle Ages, others not until the modern period. (1) In the first version we find a coloured cross on white, as in the cross flags adopted by England, Genoa, Milan, Padua, Sardinia (red cross on white), by Finland (blue cross on white) or by Nantes (black cross on white). (2) The second version of the Crusader Cross is a white cross on a coloured background, such as a white cross on red displayed in the flags of Denmark, Savoy, Malta, and Vienna, and the white cross on blue used in the flags of France and Greece, and the yellow cross on blue adopted by Sweden. (3) Thirdly, the original Saltire cross (red diagonal cross on white) was used by Ireland (St. Patrick’s Cross) and by Spain, and served as the inspiration for the white diagonal cross on blue used by Scotland (St. Andrew’s Cross), or the blue diagonal cross on white adopted by Russia (also known as St. Andrew’s Cross). Smith, 1975:46-52

and the sovereigns – and the people. These two levels were to be integrated, at least officially, in the final version of the modern national flag.

Generally speaking, a contrast can be found between the two kinds of flags that emerged after the 16<sup>th</sup> century: on the one hand, the elaborate and complex designs of flags connected to armorial bearings, and, on the other, simpler flag designs. The latter inspired the new and popular system of elementary flag designs serving as a basis for modern ones. The complex honorific flags preserved for the magnates and the more simplistic flags figured side by side on land as two different and distinctive symbols of identification.<sup>39</sup> A crucial reason for the standardisation of flag designs, corresponding to the need for a signal system at sea, was the growth of standing armies and the need for ‘ordering infantry by company and battalion’.<sup>40</sup> Subsequently the Cross of St Denis started to figure on France’s infantry colours, whereas the English made use of the red cross of St. George, which provided an indication of growing notions of differentiation between peoples.

Before examining the adoption of ‘national’ flags in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it may be noted that several flags survived from the Middle Ages into modern times. Although the mobilisation of the masses into politics was a precondition for the people to be represented by national flags, pre-modern loyalties in one form or another existed long before the French Revolution and some flags appeared early on the political scene. These early flags point to the establishment of a successful symbolic system: one nation, one flag. In this way the old ‘nations’ are the pioneers of ‘national’ flag usage and the creators of the symbolic pattern that other nations were to follow.

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<sup>39</sup> Smith, 1975:49-52

Within this triumphant ‘symbolic pattern’ the notions of ‘success’ and ‘honour’ were to be transferred to the flag much like in Roman times. The flags that have survived from the Middle Ages are the old national flags of Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, England, Scotland and the Netherlands.

The Danish flag is the oldest national flag and, even if its first official appearance is not recorded, the flag is attested to the arms of King Valdemar IV Atterdag (reigning 1340-75). Moreover, a ‘legend of chosenness’ endorses the origin of the Danish flag. According to legend, King Valdemar II (1170-1241) had a vision of a white crucifix in the darkening sky on the eve of the Battle of Lyndanisse on 15 June 1219, a vision taken as a sign of Christ’s protection in the battle against the pagan Estonians. Alternatively, the flag is said to have fallen from heaven, thereby accounting for the turning of defeat into victory.<sup>41</sup> The Danish legend bears a striking resemblance to the legend, earlier referred to, of the Cross and the monogram of Christ that appeared in the sky before the Emperor Constantine’s victory over Maxentius in 312. Thus, in the Danish case ancient symbolic representation may have acted as inspiration. The design of the Danish Cross flag is likely to have been derived from the war ensign used by the Holy Roman Empire and its provinces (white cross on a red background).<sup>42</sup>

The Swiss flag (white couped cross on red background, square in shape) can also be described as ‘archetypical European’ since the plain cross on red was in usage in medieval Europe. The Swiss arms and flag also date back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. A

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<sup>40</sup> Hulme, 1915:127-140; Smith, 1975:50

<sup>41</sup> Devereux, *The Book of World Flags*. 1992; Crampton, 1992

<sup>42</sup> Notholt, “Denmark: History of the flag”. <http://fotw.digibel.be/flags/dk.html#hist>, 1995

version of the present flag (a red flag with a narrow white cross in its canton)<sup>43</sup> was used in early medieval Europe by Schwyz, one of the three cantons forming the original league of 1291. This flag was adopted by the Confederation of Schwyz, Lucerne, Nidwalden and Uri in 1480, when it was used at the Battle of Laupen in the struggle against the Holy Roman Empire. However, it had very restricted use prior to 1848 when the modern version was adopted.<sup>44</sup> It is thus interesting to note that the flags used in the wars between the Confederation and the Empire were both red flags with a white cross, the design of the Cross being the only differentiating element.

The Cross of St. George, earlier accounted for, has been traced back to 1348, when Edward III made St. George the patron saint of the Order of the Garter. Later, after the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, Henry V ordered all soldiers siding with the English to wear a band with the colours of St. George.<sup>45</sup> Although St. George's Cross is the founding component of the Union Jack and as such constitutes an old flag, the final version of the Union Jack emerged only in 1801 after the formation of the United Kingdom in 1800. Earlier designs of the flag existed: a union flag was initiated as early as 1606 after the personal union of the crowns of Scotland and England, although the independent national cross-flags of England and Scotland were still in use on land and were legally formalised in 1707.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Smith, "Flag of Switzerland". 2004

<sup>44</sup> Crampton, 1989:57, Pedersen, 1992

<sup>45</sup> Smith, 1975

<sup>46</sup> Notholt, "United Kingdom: History of the flag", <http://fotw.digibel.be/flags/gb.html#hist>, 1996

The Swedish flag (yellow cross on blue)<sup>47</sup>, one of the ‘Scandinavian Cross flags’, was inspired by its Danish predecessor, whereas its colours come from the Swedish Coat of Arms.<sup>48</sup> Again, the exact age is not known, but the oldest records depicting the flag can be traced to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The cross flag has been claimed to date from the accession of King Gustav Vasa (1496-1560) in 1523, but it may well have been adopted three years earlier in 1520, when Sweden fought against Denmark. A royal warrant decreed from 1569 that all Swedish battle standards and banners must bear the yellow cross.<sup>49</sup>

As may be expected, the oldest flags are Cross flags with the exception of the Dutch Tricolour. The Dutch example is interesting as it signifies a first step towards a new era of inciting communities by means of flags. The Dutch ‘Prinsenvlag’<sup>50</sup> emerged as a flag of resistance and as a symbol of liberty. As such it emerged during the struggle for independence from Spain (1568-1648), the 80 years’ war that led to the formation of the United Provinces of the Netherlands. The first Dutch Tricolour displayed the colours orange, white and blue, originated from the livery colours of

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<sup>47</sup> Neveus, *Ny Svensk Vapenbok*, 1992; Neveus, “Svenska flaggan. Historik och utveckling i praxis och lagstiftning”, in Nordic Association, 1993; The Nordic Association, *From campaigns to national festivals - Nordic Flags, banners and symbols*, 1993

<sup>48</sup> It has been argued that the design of the arms dates from the 1440s when the seal of King Karl Knutsson Bonde combined the two arms of King Magnus Ladulås and King Magnus Eriksson. The Swedish Coat of Arms (blue divided quarterly by a yellow cross) and the emblem of Gustav Vasa from 1523 (armorial shield divided by a cross) served as the original inspiration for the colours of the flag. ‘Blue’ and ‘yellow’ were, however, in use from 1364, when the Duke of Mecklenburg became King of Sweden, and originated from his basic arms or more exactly from one quarter of the arms, displaying three golden crowns on a blue background. Other evidence suggests, instead, that the arms date back to 1336, when King Magnus Eriksson (1316-1374) inherited the crown of Norway, and bought Scania from Denmark. Subsequently he used the title of King of Sweden, Norway and Scania, which the three crowns were intended to represent. See: Bergsten, “Flagga för kung och fosterland”, 38-39, *Populär Historia*, No. 2/96; Crampton, 1989; Eugene, “Sweden: History of the flag”, <http://fotw.digibel.be/flags/se-3kron.html#his>, 1996; Pedersen, 1992; Swedish Institute, “The National Emblems of Sweden”, 1997

<sup>49</sup> Devereux claims that the yellow cross flag, gradually representing both the king and country, at first appeared in form of a striped flag, alternating blue and yellow, and later, under the reign of Gustav Adolf (1611-1632), in its present form. Devereux, 1992

<sup>50</sup> Smith, “Netherlands: ‘Orange on Top’”. 1975:156-163,

the House of Orange, and was adopted by supporters of William of Orange (reigning 1572-84). From 1597 onwards it was used as the sole Dutch flag, although in the first decades of the Republic (created in 1581 and recognised as independent in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia), 'red' replaced 'orange' over the period 1630-60 as a sign of political change and the growing dissociation with the House of Orange. The red, white and blue Tricolour was abolished when the Netherlands was annexed by the French in 1810, but was reintroduced in 1815 after the overthrow of Napoleon. Ironically, it was the Dutch tricolour that originally inspired the French flag, and provided Peter the Great of Russia with a model for the Russian design in the order of white, blue and red,<sup>51</sup> although it was France and Russia that would influence many European nations in their choice of flags. The early tricolours came to symbolise the struggle against oppression and the colours (red, white and blue) become known as the three 'colours of liberty'.

## The Modern Flag

The end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century marks the official beginning of the 'national' flag. This was a gradual process where official recognition came after the flag and its colours had gained some sort of symbolic value.<sup>52</sup> It is of course impossible in all cases to establish whether flags had symbolic value for the elites only or whether the people associated themselves with the first flags that were adopted. As we have seen many countries had more than one flag denoting 'belonging' before modern times. Varieties of flags referred to vague notions of 'nationality' and were in their various designs used at sea (by warships, unarmed vessels and privately owned craft) and on

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FOTW, "The Prinsevlag of the Netherlands". [http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/nl\\_prvlg.html](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/nl_prvlg.html), 2003



land (by state buildings, private businesses and individuals). The first attempts to renegotiate their symbolic representation were made by governing elites, and at times because of popular demand.

The impact of the French (1789) and the American (1775-83) Revolutions needs to be recognised in a context where flags emerged as political symbols in modern times. Talocci<sup>53</sup> emphasises that the concept of the ‘national flag’ is the direct consequence of political developments after the American and the French Revolution, where the idea of the flag representing the country and its people emerged. Since Europe is the focus of this study, the ambivalent background of the American flag will only briefly be mentioned. The American flag was adopted to represent a multi-ethnic people; it symbolised first and foremost the attempt to break free from colonial domination. At the same time the ‘Stars and Stripes’ flag made a significant contribution to the modern flag tradition as an idea of a flag representing a ‘whole population’ as well as its government, and it also reflected the more egalitarian ideas of the time. The ‘Stars and Stripes’ was created on the 14 July 1777 – by whom and where remains unclear – and it was used in different forms during the remainder of the War of Independence.<sup>54</sup> It is worth noting that

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<sup>51</sup> The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.minbuza.nl>; Crampton, 1989; Devereux, 1992; Pedersen, 1992

<sup>52</sup> Smith, 1975:53

<sup>53</sup> Talocci, *Flaggor från hela världen: Bandiere di tutto il mondo*. 1995

<sup>54</sup> A special Jack had been selected for the colonial governments in 1701, but whether it was in fact used is not clear. It is likely that the colonial civil ships and merchant vessels had their own Jack and Ensign before 1707, displaying the Union Jack in the canton of the ensigns. It is noteworthy that one of the first manifestations of American ‘resistance’ was a Red Ensign with the motto ‘Liberty and Union’, which was hoisted a year before the Revolution in Taunton, Massachusetts. Even earlier, in 1769, Boston had flown a flag of red and white stripes. The ‘rattlesnake’ with the motto ‘Don’t Tread on Me’, was another famous flag, which later developed into a depiction of the rattlesnake with 13 segments. The Pine Tree emblem, which originated from New England and was later identified with the Liberty Tree, figured on many early American flags (and also in very early Native American symbolism). The use of the Red Ensign with the motto in the fly, or with the Pine Tree in the canton and that of the plain Pine Tree Flag, were the first prime sources for the American flag tradition. These constituted together with the Boston striped flag the main starting points for the

America did not have a flag representing it (or the colonies) prior to the conflicts with England.

The developments in France demonstrate a clear break with its own Ancien Régime and a popular demand for participation in the political process. Prior to the outbreak of the Revolution, the flags of the Bourbon dynasty had been mainly white, as in the case of the two important flags, the Naval Ensign and the Royal Standard, the latter also displaying the golden fleur-de-lis and the royal arms. Besides, individual flags of red, white and blue had been in use long before the Revolution (see case study further on in this chapter), and combinations of these three colours also had a past as royal livery colours.

The process of renegotiating the official representation of France began with the introduction of cockades.<sup>55</sup> From 1789 onwards, the troops of the Paris Militia – later the National Guard – were required to wear the livery colours of Paris: blue and red (white was added shortly afterwards); and an official naval flag of red-white-blue was adopted in October 1790.<sup>56</sup> The final form of the Tricolour design (during the first Revolutionary period), the first version of which was introduced in 1789, dates from 1794 when the modern Tricolour was substituted for the two

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colonial flag evolving during 1775. The emblem of the rattlesnake was seen in the canton of the Red Ensign, which was hoisted by a Pennsylvanian regiment in 1775, and in the flag of stripes used by the South Carolina Navy. In 1776 the flag hoisted in Massachusetts was described as ‘English Colours but more Striped’, i.e. a British Red Ensign but with white stripes across the field. The British Red Ensign was also known as the ‘Continental Colours’ or the ‘Grand Union Flag’ - coincidentally the same flag as was used by the East India Company. The number of stars on the American Flag has changed with time from 13 to 50 in order to correspond with the increasing number of states. This process commenced after the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Crampton, 1992: 120-129; Smith, 1975: 292-293

<sup>55</sup> The ‘cockade’ was at the time an important political symbol. A ‘cockade’ is a rosette, a bow of livery or a badge in the national colours.

<sup>56</sup> Three quarters of this new war ensign were still white, but its canton (the upper hoist quarter of the flag) repeated the national colours twice: vertical stripes of red-white-blue, thus the reverse of the

previous flags, the Jack and the Ensign, flown at sea and exhibiting vertical stripes of blue, white and red, which were meant to symbolise the new notion of nationhood.<sup>57</sup>

The many uprisings in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe were inspired by the French Revolution and had fundamental effects for the development of national symbolism. The tricolour appeared, for example, in Germany (black, red and gold) as early as the War of Liberation (1813-14), fought against France, and it became a mark of resistance against French administration and domination. The hundreds of German-speaking states, belonging to the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation until it ceased to exist in 1806, fought for unification under the tricolour as a symbol of liberty during the Napoleonic Wars. The German colours originated primarily from the uniforms of the Lützowian Free Corps (black with gold and red details), who started the German resistance, and their influence was later reinforced when they were displayed in the patriotic rallies at Warburg Castle (1817) and Hambach (1832). The German tricolour was adopted by the new German parliament in 1848; in 1867 Bismarck's tricolour of black-white-red superseded it, but the original tricolour was restored with the Weimar Republic in 1919-33.<sup>58</sup>

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modern order, were bordered by the same colours. The design of this canton also served separately as a French Jack (flown at the bow of a ship).

<sup>57</sup> Crampton, 1992

<sup>58</sup> During the rule of Adolf Hitler (1933-45) all flags displayed the colours black, white and red. When the Federal Republic was created after World War Two, it was decided to revert to the black-red-yellow national arms and to the flag of the first republic. The flag and the arms were restored by both German states in 1949, with the only difference that from 1959 the flag of East Germany had a communist emblem (hammer representing heavy industry, dividers representing scientific progress and wheat-ears representing agriculture) added to its centre. The Tricolour was restored in 1990 in connection with the reunification. See Crampton 1992, Devereux, 1992; Smith "The Flag of Germany", 2004; Smith, 1975:114-123

The Revolutions of 1848-9 against oppressive regimes followed in many ways the French pattern of public revolt from 1789 and the same symbolism was adopted. The tricolour flag became the mark of revolution, and several new tricolour flags appeared in 1848 combining the 'winning' formula of 1789 with national colours and traditions. Thus, tricolours were adopted in Romania, Hungary, and Schleswig-Holstein in 1848. The tricolour flag also appeared the same year in Slovakia, which imitated the Russian colours, and in Ireland where the choice of colours was made with unification in mind: 'white' to express peace and unity between the traditional 'green' of Ireland and the 'orange' for the supporters of the late King William of Orange (1650-1702). The tricolour appeared in Italy and produced symbolic changes in Parma, Venice, and Naples. Savoy-Sardinia established the tricolour as early as March 1848 (adding the shield of Savoy with a blue border) and it was hoisted again in 1859 with the movement to free 'Italy' from Austrian oppression. With some modifications the tricolour flag was adopted by the unified Kingdom of Italy in 1861. However, several of the tricolours flown during the revolutionary year 1848 were lowered in 1849, but some of them have later been restored (see tables on the European flags further on in this chapter).<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> The Red Flag is another political symbol that later gained great national significance. The colour red symbolised blood, struggle and martyrdom. The first reference to the Red Flag, or the 'Flag of Defiance', is found in connection with the siege of Ostend, when the city held out against the Spaniards during the years 1601-4. In the context of revolutions the Red Flag was also used during the French Revolution, first hoisted as a sign that martial law had been decreed, but later by the mob as a sign of defiance. The Red Flag was brought out again in the Revolutions of 1830 and 1848 in France, and was, for some time, even proposed as a national flag. Although this proposal never materialised, a sign of its influence can be seen in the red cravat attached to the Tricolour for a while. In France the Red Flag, as a symbol representing a politically 'independent' community, was used for the last time during the (Paris) Commune of 1870, and, in this way, became later associated with Communism. In Russia, it was first used in the Revolution of 1905, and again in 1917. All of the Bolshevik flags were red with different coloured inscriptions. The Red Flag with gold inscriptions was chosen as flag for the Russian Republic in July 1918, which, in turn, led to the adoption of Red Flags all over the Soviet republics and to the establishment of the Red flag of the Soviet Union in 1924. See Crampton, 1992:127-128

For many European nations gaining independence was a long process and the adoption of national flags became the symbol of this struggle. An illustrative example is Norway, which tried to achieve independence from Denmark in 1814 under a red flag with a white cross (like that of the Danes) and the Norwegian arms (a golden crowned lion holding an axe). As Norway entered the union with Sweden (1814) the country was reduced to using the Swedish flag with a specific ‘union symbol’. The present Norwegian flag dates from 1821 when the white Danish cross on red was overlaid by a blue cross – colours inspired by the French Tricolour.<sup>60</sup>

The collapse of communism saw a resurgence of nationalism in Eastern Europe spanning a continuum from ethnic genocide and conflicts to a struggle for democracy and self-determination. In the midst of all this it may seem an odd development that national aspirations would also concentrate on symbolic manifestations. Many countries in Central and Eastern Europe redefined themselves, their past and their present, through a process of selecting new national symbols (flags, anthems and national days) from 1989 onwards. Illuminating examples, mentioned in Chapter One, were the adoption of the horizontal tricolour (red-white-blue) with the chequered shield<sup>61</sup>, and the flag in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1998.<sup>62</sup> The Baltic States from 1989 restored their national flags of 1918.<sup>63</sup> Looking back it seems appropriate that the symbol of the 1989 revolution in the GDR, which led to the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November, was the flag with the communist emblem

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<sup>60</sup> Smith, “Flag of Norway”, 2004

<sup>61</sup> Ignatieff. *Blood and Belonging – Journeys into the New Nationalisms*, 1993:18

<sup>62</sup> Flagmaster, “The 1998 Flag change, Proposals from the Westerdorp Commission”, “Bosnia and Herzegovina: A new ‘neutral’ flag”, No. 89, 1998: 9-12; FOTW, *The Law on the Flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, adopted by the Office of the High Representatives, Sarajevo. <http://fotw.digibel.be/flags/ba-law.html>

<sup>63</sup> The Flag Bulletin, 1992; Understanding Global Issues, *Flags of Europe: Their history and Symbolism*, 1994:1

cut out of it. The same kind of symbolism was used also in Romania and Bulgaria. Ignatieff, however, writes: “A state that has a flag with a hole in it is a state that no longer knows what it is.”<sup>64</sup> Perhaps the interpretation ought to be: a state with a hole in its flag is changing the course of its future and re-defining itself via its main national symbol. As Firth (1973) argues:

A new national flag is a potent symbol, a highly condensed focus of sentiment which emphasizes the independence of the newly created unit [...] it is significant that the entry of the many new states to the United Nations has always been accompanied by [...] the display of their new flags.<sup>65</sup>

The changes we witnessed in Central and Eastern Europe, where national borders during the many conflicts of independence had been challenged and also defended, brought about a new symbolic regime of flags which display, inter alia, the pan-Slavic colours of the Russian tricolour. These cases stand in contrast to examples such as Britain, France, Sweden and Denmark where national symbolism has been retained irrespective of border adjustments, and whose national symbols are taken for granted, because they are no longer, to the same extent, associated with political controversy.

As regards the usage of flags throughout the ages and the emergence of national flags we finally find that vast systematization has been needed to clarify the different expressions of nationhood. Today, national flags are occasionally referred to as ‘Citizens’ flags or ‘General Usage’ flags. A corresponding ‘State flag’ (‘Government flag’) may be used but most nations let the national flag serve also as the flag of the state. The nation can also be represented by a Merchant flag, an Ensign, a Jack, a Royal flag or a Presidential flag and many different military flags.

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<sup>64</sup> Ignatieff. 1993:45

<sup>65</sup> Firth, *Symbols Public and Private*. 1975: 347

The Merchant flag is flown by a merchant ship, whereas the Ensign is flown by a naval ship. The Jack is a small flag flown from the bow of a ship but only while in port, to further denote country of origin. The Royal flag or the Presidential flag are used by the respective heads of state, indicating their presence, for example, at their residence or at a national ceremony.<sup>66</sup> In other words, the matter of clarifying ‘nationality’ has become a complex matter and requires encompassing systematization.

## **2.2 The National Flags of Europe: a Contemporary Survey**

Turning now from the earlier forms of representation and the establishment of national symbols to the general pattern of flag symbolism in Europe, it will be shown that the flags in the European context are intimately linked with the formation of a national past. In order to understand this, a few important variables need to be isolated from which data can be processed and systematised. In the tables which follow, the flags’ origin, date of adoption and institution, changes and typology (flag families) are identified.

The survey below illustrates the intrinsic qualities of the flags and the assumption that national flags have something to tell us about the properties of nation-states. A considerable amount of information can be obtained from looking at the history, design and composition of the flags as they are used symbolically to legitimise a distinctive national history as well the nation’s sovereignty. Moreover, the design of the flag tells us how the nation developed, and what is considered to be ‘national’.

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<sup>66</sup> Weitman, “National Flags: A Sociological Overview”. 1973: 333

All flags are shortcuts to the history of the nations they represent. The appearance of flags tells us when different socio-political entities emerge as pre-modern assertive units or as modern nations. The answer can be deduced from the time of their appearance and from the historical events leading to it. The flags, in other words, provide information on how long these units have existed and when they started to express themselves in a 'symbolic form', an outline of which can be determined in the distinction made between 'old', 'modern' and 'new' flags. The 'old' national flags date back to the Middle Ages and the pre-Renaissance period. 'Modern' flags date from another significant period, the French Revolution and the period following the Napoleonic wars, whereas the 'new' flags enter the scene after World War One. Alterations, modifications and changes that have caused a break in the continuity of the symbolic representations indicate formations of unions, changes of political systems, struggle against oppression or the fight for independence.

In this context various symbolic groups or flag families may be distinguished, a typology also linked to the age of the flags. Thus, identifying the age and adoption of flags constitutes a way of dating the emergence of a symbolic regime. It is necessary to restrict this survey to dating the existing European flags and the age and continuity of the symbolic representation of their corresponding modern units. Here it is clear that different national narratives exist and that various symbolic repertoires appear, and that the European nations can be classified in different national categories on the grounds of their symbolic appearance.

The European flags have been classified from the time when the present flag first appeared in its most basic design. This means that minor modifications or





alterations as regards shades or dimensions<sup>67</sup> are not considered a break in symbolic continuity. The conclusions of the tables<sup>68</sup> are investigated in more detail in Chapter Three. The documentary materials on which these tables are based appear in Appendix One in the same order as in the tables below.

## 2.2.1 The Symbolic Regimes of Europe: ‘Old’, ‘Modern’ and ‘New’




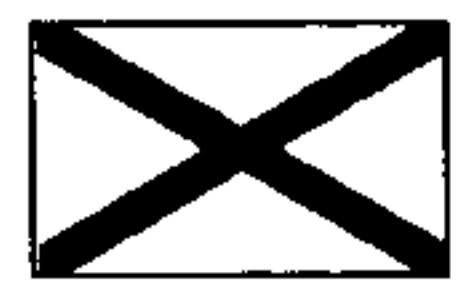




**Table 2-1: ‘Old’ Flags of Europe: from the Middle Ages onwards**


### OLD NATIONAL FLAGS

FLAG	APPEARANCE BACKGROUND	DATE	TYPE
<b>Denmark</b> 	<p>According to legend King Valdemar II saw a vision of ‘Dannebroggen’ (The Banner of the Danes) in the sky during the Battle of Lyndanisse (1219) against the pagan Estonians. The flag is depicted on the arms of King Valdemar IV Atterdag (King 1340-75). Similar cross flags were used by small states in the Holy Roman Empire (Switzerland, Savoy). The Imperial war flag was of the same design as the present Danish flag. Usage among the Danes is recorded during their struggle for a constitution (1849) when a rectangular form of the present flag was employed. The flag has been regulated in many laws, but the original date of the official adoption is unknown, although the first flag law dates from 1696. The Danish Flag was banned during the occupation of Nazi Germany (1941-45).</p>	<p>13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> c. 1340</p> <p>(1941-45)</p>	Cross Flag
<b>Switzerland</b> 	<p>The arms and flag of Switzerland date back to the 14th c. A similar flag (red with a narrow white cross in its canton) was used in Schwyz and based on the imperial war flag of the Holy Roman Empire (white cross on red). This flag was adopted by the Confederation of Schwyz, Lucerne, Nidwalden and Uri in 1480. The present flag had restricted use prior to 1848 when the modern version (white couped cross on red) was introduced.</p>	<p>(14<sup>th</sup> c.)</p> <p>1480</p> <p>(1848)</p>	Cross Flag

<sup>67</sup> The term ‘modification’ is used as referring to smaller alterations of dimensions and colours, and to additions or removals of particular symbols, whereas a ‘change’ refers to a complete alteration of the flag.





<sup>68</sup> Each table contains information about the present flags, design and colours. However, this is not a technical account of flags, but instead an analysis on the flags in Europe in a sociological context. Thus, the reader will not find the colour-coding customary in vexillological literature. The purpose is to write about flags in an accessible way, moving away from vexillological and heraldic vocabulary as much as possible.

<p><b>Sweden</b></p> 	<p>The colours are derived from the arms of the Folkung dynasty (14<sup>th</sup> c.) and the present coat of arms (blue shield with three golden crowns) also dates from this time. These symbols were the basis for flags of blue and yellow of which the first - with horizontal stripes – was recorded in the late 14th c. The present flag figured at the 1523 election of Gustav Vasa as King, and was influenced by the Danish Cross, Denmark being Sweden's chief rival. A flag with the present coat of arms appeared at sea (early 16<sup>th</sup> c.). The first flag law was introduced in 1663 when the flag was acknowledged as the symbol of Sweden. To reflect the Swedish-Norwegian union (1815-1905) a 'union mark' was placed in the canton of both the Norwegian and Swedish flags. This mark was first a white diagonal cross on red, and later a diagonally divided emblem based on the Swedish and Norwegian flags. The current flag law was adopted in 1906.</p>	<p>(14<sup>th</sup> c.) 1523 (1815-1905)</p>	<p>Cross Flag</p>
<p><b>England</b></p>  <p><b>Scotland</b></p>  <p><b>N. Ireland</b></p>  <p><b>(Wales)</b></p>  <p><b>Britain</b></p> 	<p><i>England:</i> St. George's Cross (white with red cross) dates from 1348, when Edward III made St. George the patron saint of the Order of the Garter.  <i>Scotland:</i> References to the Saltire (diagonal) cross of St. Andrew (blue with white diagonal cross) were made in the 8<sup>th</sup> c. (flag) and 12<sup>th</sup> c. (colours).  <i>N. Ireland:</i> The Cross of St. Patrick (white with red diagonal cross) dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> c.  <i>Wales:</i> (Red dragon on white-over-green) The colours are the livery colours of the Tudor dynasty in the 15<sup>th</sup> c. The 'Dragon' is also claimed to go back to the 15<sup>th</sup> c. and has been the official badge for Wales since 1801. The Welsh flag is not represented in the Union Jack, and was not recognised until the 1950s. The Welsh Dragon constitutes a 'Heraldic Flag'.  <i>Britain:</i> 'Union Jack' is a combination of the three cross flags above. (1) England and Scotland in personal union combined their cross flags at sea (1606); (2) the Act of Union of England and Scotland established the flag also at land (1707); (3) the final version was adopted in 1801 confirming the Union with Northern Ireland by including the Cross of St. Patrick.</p>	<p>1348 12<sup>th</sup> c. 16<sup>th</sup> c. 1606- (1707) (1801)</p>	<p>Cross Flag Cross Flag Cross Flag Cross Flag</p>
<p><b>The Netherlands</b></p> 	<p>The Dutch flag (Prinsevlag) was first used in the war of independence (1568-1648). The original colours (orange-white-blue) were taken from the House of Orange and employed by the supporters of William of Orange (1533-84). The flag was adopted in 1597 after the Republic had been formed (1581). Red was officially substituted for orange when the independence of the Republic was recognised in 1648, but the flag had been in use since 1630. The flag was abolished 1810-15 when the Netherlands was annexed by France, and not in use during the German occupation 1940-45.</p>	<p>(1597) 1630 (1648) (1810-15) (1940-45)</p>	<p>Tricolour</p>
<p><b>Russia</b></p> 	<p>The first flag associated with Russia is the Cross Flag of its patron saint, St. Andrew, a white flag with a blue diagonal cross. The Order of St. Andrew was instituted by Peter the Great in 1699, after which several flags were used in St. Andrew's honour. Peter the Great also visited the Netherlands in 1699 to prepare for the establishment of the Russian navy, and was inspired by the Dutch Tricolour, which served as a model for the flag he chose for the Russian merchant ships. The shield of the Grand Principality of Moscow as well as a quartered flag flown on the first Russian warship in 1667 may also have been sources of inspiration. The tsars tried without success to impose a black-orange-white tricolour during the 19<sup>th</sup> c. At the beginning of WW1 the Russian imperial arms were displayed on the tricolour (white-blue-red). During the Soviet era all flags were based on the Red Flag and during the Soviet Union the official flag included the hammer, sickle and gold-bordered star in the upper hoist. The original Russian Tricolour was re-adopted in 1991, and confirmed in the Federal Law <i>On National Flag of Russia</i> in 2000.</p>	<p>(1699) 1699 (WW1) (Soviet era) 1991</p>	<p>(Cross Flag) Tricolour</p>






<p><b>Spain</b><sup>69</sup></p> 	<p>The colours of Aragon (four red stripes on gold) were granted by Charles the Bald to the Count of Aragon in the 9<sup>th</sup> c., whereas the arms of the united kingdoms of Castile (yellow tower on red) and León (a red lion on white) date from the 13<sup>th</sup> c. (1230). The present flag (yellow-red) is based on the arms of Castile and Aragon and influenced by the arms of Navarra and Granada. Under the Bourbon dynasty (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> c.) the flag was white and displayed various combinations of the arms described above, and it also included the Pillars of Hercules with the motto 'Plus ultra' ('More Beyond') to reflect Spanish discoveries. The present flag (with a crowned national coat of arms) was adopted by royal decree in 1785. Some changes took place during the republics and the civil war. The flag officially used 1931-39 was a horizontal tricolour of red-yellow-purple with a small coat of arms without the crown and the Bourbon escutcheon (sword and sceptre). However, in 1938 Franco reintroduced the red-yellow-red flag with a more elaborate coat of arms. This design was modified in 1945, and again in 1977. The original design was finally restored in 1981. The flag can be displayed without the coat of arms (with the crowned shield of the old Kingdom of Spain and the Pillars of Hercules).</p>	<p>(13<sup>th</sup> c.)</p> <p>(17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> c.)</p> <p>1785</p> <p>(1931-39 1938-45)</p> <p>1981</p>	<p>(Dynastic Flag )</p> <p>Heraldic Flag</p>
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**Table 2-2: 'Modern' Flags: from the French Revolution**

### MODERN NATIONAL FLAGS

FLAG	APPEARANCE BACKGROUND	DATE	TYPE
<p><b>France</b></p> 	<p>The three colours of the tricolour is a combination of those of pre-modern flags: the blue of the cloak of St. Martin (warflag -1356), the Banner of France (blue royal banner with golden fleur-de-lis, 1108-), the white of Joan of Arc and the Bourbons (white constituted the national flag colour 1431-1794), and the red of the Oriflamme of Charlemagne and St. Denis (crusader flag 1124-1415). The coat of arms of the city of Paris became the later conclusive inspiration for the Tricolour (1789). The flag has been abolished three times and minor modifications followed in 1794, 1814-15 and 1830. The final version was adopted in 1848.</p>	<p>(1108-)</p> <p>1789 (1794) (1814) (1830) 1848</p>	<p>(Dynastic, Religious Flags)</p> <p>Tricolour</p>
<p><b>Belgium</b></p> 	<p>The heraldic colours originate from the provinces of Brabant, Flanders and Hainault. The first Belgian flag was arranged horizontally, and used in 1789 by freedom fighters in the struggle for independence against Austria. Belgium was annexed by France (1792-1814) and by the Netherlands (1814/15-1831). The present flag was formally adopted in 1831 after independence.</p>	<p>(1789)</p> <p>1831</p>	<p>Tricolour (square)</p>
<p><b>Greece</b></p> 	<p>The colours were first used 1821-22 on a similar flag during the war of independence: the stripes represented the motto 'Liberty or Death'. The colours were confirmed by King Otto I at his coronation in 1833. Greece had two national flags until 1970: a white Cross flag (with a yellow crown in the centre removed in 1970) used nationally, and the present flag used internationally. The latter was adopted as the sole flag 1978 and is almost identical to the one of 1833.</p>	<p>(1821-22)</p> <p>1833</p> <p>1978</p>	<p>Cross Flag</p>
<p><b>Italy</b></p> 	<p>The first Italian tricolour (horizontal) appeared in the Revolutionary Republics of Northern Italy from 1796 onwards. The Cisalpine Republic used a horizontal tricolour in 1797. The vertical tricolour was adopted in 1848 by several Italian states with the arms of the House of Savoy officially added in 1861. The arms were removed when the republic was established in 1946, and the flag was officially adopted in 1948.</p>	<p>(1796-)</p> <p>1848</p> <p>(1861-) 1946-48</p>	<p>Tricolour</p>




<sup>69</sup> The Spanish flag is a borderline case appearing towards the end of the 'old' period. Since it is based on the medieval colours of the arms of Castile and Aragon, and influenced by the design of the arms of the latter, it has been categorised as an 'old' flag.




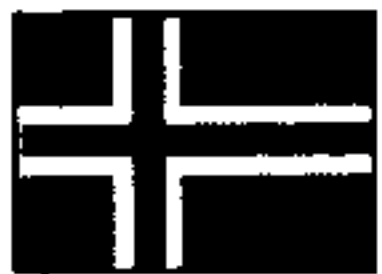

<p><b>Germany</b></p> 	<p>The colours (black, red and gold) were influenced by the uniforms of the Black Jäger volunteers (1782-1834) fighting against Napoleon in 1813-15. The black-red-gold flag was adopted by parliament 1848-50, but superseded by Bismarck's black-white-red tricolour 1867-1918. The Weimar Republic re-adopted the black-red-gold tricolour in 1919. The colours of black, white and red were again displayed 1933-45, with the Swastika Flag, when the Tricolour of the Weimar Republic was disparaged as 'reactionary'. The Federal Republic re-adopted the black-red-yellow Tricolour in 1949. East Germany displayed the same flag 1949-1959, but added a communist symbol (hammer, a pair of compasses surrounded by a ring of rye) in its centre from 1959. This emblem was removed at the reunification in 1990 and the tricolour re-instituted.</p>	<p>1848 (1867-1918) 1919  (1933-45)  1949 1990</p>	<p>Tricolour</p>
<p><b>Hungary</b></p> 	<p>The colours were used at the coronation of Matthias II (1608), Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, when a precursor of the modern flag was employed. Red, white and green have been associated with the monarchs of Hungary since the 13th c. Hungary rebelled against Austria in 1848 and the short independence restored the colours in the pattern of a tricolour. Red, white and green, were also displayed on the ensign of Austria-Hungary (1867-1918) and on the Hungarian flag 1918-1945. A communist-style emblem (with a red star) was added by party leader Rákosi 1949-1956. The present flag was re-established in 1957, but displayed another communist emblem added by party leader Kádár (also with a red star) 1958-89.</p>	<p>(1608)  1848-49 (1867-1918) 1918-45 (1949-56) 1957 (1958-89)</p>	<p>Tricolour</p>
<p><b>Finland</b></p> 	<p>The shield with a rampant yellow lion, an armoured human arm holding a sword and white flowers on red had been given to the titular Grand Duchy of Finland in 1581, when King Johan III of Sweden made himself Grand Duke. (He had been the Royal Duke of Finland since 1556) The blue flag with a white Cross was introduced in 1862 and adopted in 1863. It is interesting to note that an important step for the recognition of Finnish as an official language was taken in the Language Decree of 1863. Finnish was made an official language of the same standing as Swedish 1892, following Russia's intention to isolate the Grand Duchy from Sweden. During the civil war (1917-18) an armorial banner was in use, but the present flag was readopted in 1918 when the republic was established. The shade of blue was modified in 1995.</p>	<p>(1581)  1862-63 (1917-18) 1918</p>	<p>Cross Flag</p>
<p><b>Romania</b></p> 	<p>Local flags (based on pre-modern heraldic banners) were recognised by the Ottoman government for use in Moldavia and Walachia, e.g. a naval ensign used with horizontal stripes of blue-yellow-red. A horizontal version was the basis of the present flag and employed in the 1848 revolutions with the inscription "Justice" and "Brotherhood". The creation of Romania (1859) led to a horizontal tricolour (with blue streamers) being adopted in 1861. The vertical tricolour was established in 1867, when Romania was still under Ottoman Rule but various changes were made in 1877 (independence), 1897, 1922, and under communism in 1948, 1952 (the arms had a scroll with the letters 'RPR' surmounted by a red star), and 1965 (the arms had a scroll with the word 'ROMANIA' and were surmounted by a red star). The vertical tricolour from 1861 was re-adopted in 1989.</p>	<p>(1848)  (1861) 1867  6 designs 1877-1989</p>	<p>Tricolour</p>
<p><b>Bulgaria</b></p> 	<p>The coat of arms (14<sup>th</sup> c.) was used in 19<sup>th</sup> c. flags against the Ottoman Empire. Bulgaria was an independent kingdom 1878-1945. The colour green from the flag of the independence movement was substituted for blue in the Bulgarian form of the Russian flag, introduced in 1878 and officially recognised in 1879. The communist-led anti-Nazi organisation used the OF-flag (Homeland Front) 1944-47. The years 1948 – 1990 saw four different variations of the original tricolour when communist symbols were added to the canton. One version (1971) displayed the coat of arms (golden rampant lion in a blue oval shield, surrounded with wheat and a red star over it) and the 'national dates' of Bulgaria 681-1944 (from settlement to liberation). The 1879 flag was re-adopted in 1990.</p>	<p>1878-79 (1944-47)  4 designs 1948-90 1990</p>	<p>Tricolour</p>




<p><b>Norway</b></p> 	<p>The Danish flag was in use for a long time in Norway until 1814. During the struggle for independence in 1814 the first Norwegian flag appeared (red with white cross, lion and axe in canton). The Norwegian coat of arms has been claimed to date from 1230, although current legislation is from 1937. The Danish cross was overlaid by a blue cross, and the colours were inspired by the French Tricolour. This flag was adopted by parliament in 1821 for use in coastal waters only and its usage was highly restricted by Sweden. The Swedish flag was the official flag used during the union between Sweden and Norway 1814-1905 with a distinctive canton (a white diagonal cross on red), and later a diagonally divided emblem based on the flags of Norway and Sweden. In connection with independence in 1905 the design of 1821 was officially recognised.</p>	<p>(1814)</p> <p>(1821)</p> <p>(1815-1905)</p> <p>1905</p>	<p>Cross Flag</p>
<p><b>Portugal</b></p> 	<p>The Portuguese flag displays the shield of the coat of arms and the armillary sphere (an old nautical instrument in memory of Henry the Navigator, 1394-1460). The shield depicts five small blue shields arranged as a cross, each with five white discs (12<sup>th</sup> c.); the border, red with seven yellow castles, was added later (13<sup>th</sup> c.). The armillary sphere dates from the reign of Manoel I (King 1495-1521), and represents the achievements of the Age of Discovery. The old Portuguese flag (blue and white) was inspired by the coat of arms and was in use from 1830 until 1910 when it was discarded on the fall of the monarchy. 'Green' figured in pre-republican flags and has been traced back to the colours of Henry the Navigator (1393-1460). 'Red' dates from 1910 and the formation of the republic. Portugal is a good example of the change in symbolism (from monarchical to republican) during the 19<sup>th</sup> c. The present flag incorporates 'old' elements.</p>	<p>(12<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> c. coat of arms)</p> <p>1830-1910</p> <p>1910</p>	<p>(Armorial banners)</p> <p>(Heraldic Flag)</p> <p>Heraldic Flag</p>

**Table 2-3: 'New' Flags: from World War One**

### NEW NATIONAL FLAGS

<b>FLAG</b>	<b>APPEARANCE BACKGROUND</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TYPE</b>
<p><b>Ireland</b></p> 	<p>The colours of the Irish flag represent Catholics (green), Protestants (orange) and peace (white). The flag was first temporarily introduced at the rebellion of 1848 but was not in use afterwards. It was revived and arranged in the modern form in connection with the Easter rising of 1916. A final version was adopted by the Irish Parliament in 1919, was consolidated in 1920 and re-adopted in the Constitution of 1937.</p>	<p>(1848)</p> <p>1916</p>	<p>Tricolour</p>
<p><b>Austria</b></p> 	<p>The colours and the arms of Austria (shield of red-white-red stripes) have been attributed to Duke Frederick II of Austria (13<sup>th</sup> c.) and formed the basis for a naval ensign of 1786. However, the imperial banner (the black imperial eagle) was in use until the end of the Holy Roman Empire (1806). Another flag was combined with the colours of Hungary (1867) until the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1918). The present flag, established with the new Republic in 1918, disappeared 1938-45 with Austria's amalgamation into Nazi Germany. The 1918 flag was re-established in 1945.</p>	<p>(1786)</p> <p>(-1806)</p> <p>(1867-1918)</p> <p>1918</p> <p>(1938-45)</p> <p>1945</p>	<p>(Imperial Banner)</p> <p>(Armorial Flag)</p> <p>Heraldic flag</p>
<p><b>Poland</b></p> 	<p>The flag is based on 13<sup>th</sup> c. arms used during the Polish-Lithuanian conflicts with the Teutonic Knights (14<sup>th</sup> c.) and during the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (16<sup>th</sup> c.). The arms consisted of a white eagle on a red shield as a contrast to the arms of the Holy Roman Empire with a black eagle on a golden shield. The partition of Poland (by Russia, Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire) created the Duchy of Warsaw (1795) and later the Kingdom of Poland under Russian influence (1815). During these periods the armorial banner (white eagle on red) was in use, and it was later employed by nationalists after WWI. The present flag (new design of old colours) was adopted in connection with independence (1918) but disappeared temporarily (1941-44).</p>	<p>(14<sup>th</sup> c.-1815)</p> <p>1918</p> <p>(1941-44)</p>	<p>(Armorial Banner)</p> <p>Heraldic Flag</p>

<p><b>Lithuania</b></p> 	<p>The arms (a red shield with a knight and horse in white) have been claimed to date from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (14th c.) and the Polish-Lithuanian Union. With independence from Germany in 1918 the heraldic banner (red with a knight on a horse) was 'revived'. Due to the complex design of the latter the present tricolour flag came into use in 1918. Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union in 1940, by Nazi Germany 1941-44, and was annexed by the USSR in 1944, and became a socialist republic in 1945. Two versions of the Red Flag were used, one 1945-1953 and the other 1953-1990: the first with initials of the Lithuanian SSR (LIETUVOS, TSR) and the hammer and sickle emblem in yellow, the second with a green strip and a narrow line of white at the bottom of the flag including also the hammer and sickle emblem and the star. In 1988 the pre-Soviet tricolour (yellow-green-red) was restored and was re-established in 1989 as a result of popular pressure. Lithuania declared itself independent in 1990, and re-adopted the flag of 1918 officially.</p>	<p>(14-16<sup>th</sup>c.) (1918)</p> <p>1918</p> <p>(1940-41) (1941-44) (1945-53) (1953-90)</p> <p>1988-90</p>	<p>(Heraldic Banner )</p> <p>Tricolour</p>
<p><b>Estonia</b></p> 	<p>The present flag was designed by students in 1881 and adopted in 1918 for the short period of independence. While annexed to the USSR, Estonia displayed a first version of the Red Flag (with the Latin initials in yellow 'ENSV', Eesti Nõukogude Sotsialistlik Vabariik, and a yellow hammer and sickle below) 1945-1953, and a second version 1953-1990 (red with wavy blue and white waves across in lower part of the flag, indicating Estonia's position by the Baltic, and the hammer and sickle emblem and the star). Estonia regained the right to use its pre-Soviet flag in 1988 and it was readopted by popular demand in 1989, and officially instituted in 1990.</p>	<p>(1881) 1918</p> <p>(1945-53) (1953-90)</p> <p>1988-90</p>	<p>Tricolour</p>
<p><b>Latvia</b></p> 	<p>The colours (crimson and white) have been claimed to originate from the 13<sup>th</sup> c., but they also figure as the colours of the independence movement (19<sup>th</sup> c.). Students raised the crimson and white flag in 1870, which was recognised in 1917, adopted in connection with independence in 1918 and established by law in 1923. When Latvia became a Socialist Republic of the U.S.S.R a version of the Red Flag was employed 1945-1953 (like the U.S.S.R. flag with the initials of the Latvian Republic 'LPSR' above the hammer and sickle emblem in yellow). During 1953-1990 another Red Flag with wavy bands of blue and white at the bottom of the flag (to differentiate it from Estonia's flag and to indicate Latvia's position by the Baltic) was used. In 1988 Latvia regained the right to use its pre-Soviet flag and the flag and the arms were re-adopted in 1989 and re-established in 1990.</p>	<p>(1870)</p> <p>1917-23</p> <p>(1945-53)</p> <p>(1953-90)</p> <p>1988-90</p>	<p>Heraldic Flag</p>
<p><b>Iceland</b></p> 	<p>Iceland had to seek approval from the Danish King in order to introduce a distinctive Icelandic flag in 1915. Approval (for the blue flag with a white-bordered red cross) was given with several reservations. The Icelandic flag could be used alone in local waters, but always together with the Danish flag on land, where the Danish flag had to fly above the Icelandic flag. However, the Icelandic flag was fully recognised when Iceland became a separate kingdom under the Danish monarchy in 1918. Iceland became a Republic in 1944 and the shade of blue was altered.</p>	<p>(1915)</p> <p>1918 (1944)</p>	<p>Cross Flag</p>
<p><b>Czech Republic</b></p> 	<p>A bicolour flag of white and red was used in 1918 in connection with the formation of Czechoslovakia. The colours originate from the coat of arms of Bohemia, granted by the Holy Roman Empire (12<sup>th</sup> c.). The blue triangle was added to the red and white colours in 1920 to incorporate in full the colours of the Slovaks and Ruthenians. The flag disappeared during WW2 when a new protectorate flag was introduced (consisting of three horizontal, equally wide stripes of white, red and blue), but was revived at the re-constitution of Czechoslovakia (1945) and officially re-established 1948-1989. Czechoslovakia (Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia) was disunited in 1992. The Czech Republic decided to keep the flag in 1993.</p>	<p>(-1918)</p> <p>1920 (1939-44)</p> <p>1993</p>	<p>(Union Flag)</p> <p>Heraldic Flag</p>

<p><b>Croatia</b></p> 	<p>The chequerboard (<i>checquy argent and gules</i>) is claimed to date back (at least) to the 11th c. (Demeter Zvonimir, d. 1089). A pedigree (genealogical table) of the Habsburgs (1512-1518) proves that the coat of arms was used as an official emblem. In 1525 it was displayed on a medal. A coronation flag (with the chequerboard and above the inscription 'CROATIÆ') was flown at the coronation of the future Austrian emperor Ferdinand as Croato-Hungarian King in 1830. Such flags were used to represent each of the realms in the Empire. The tricolour flag of red, white and blue (with a combined shield) was first used in 1848 in the Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia during the fight for independence from Austro-Hungarian rule. The imperial flag of Russia as an opponent to Austria-Hungary inspired it. The tricolour was forbidden in 1852 but reintroduced with a combined coat of arms surmounted by the crown of St. Stephen in the 1860s for the Triune Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia and Slavonia (1867 - 1918). The Tricolour in Royal Yugoslavia was blue, white and red (1918-29 Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, 1929-41 Kingdom of Yugoslavia). The Croatian Bannate in Yugoslavia (1939-1941) reintroduced the tricolour of red, white and blue. When the Ustaša proclaimed the Independent State of Croatia (1941-45) they added the Ustaša party emblem and the shield of Croatia (chequerboard of <i>white</i> and <i>red</i>) to the flag. In 1945 these emblems were replaced by a red star (1945) and a yellow-bordered star (1947). This was done in the era of Josip Broz Tito (1945-80) and the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (1945), the Federal People's Republic of Croatia (1946-63) and later the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963-1990). The flag (the 'Sahovnica') in its present form was adopted in 1990, this time with the chequerboard in the order of <i>red</i> and <i>white</i>, and with a crowned shield, which is constituted by five smaller shields, including those of Dubrovnik, Dalmatia, Istria and Slavonia.</p>	<p>(1848) (1941-45) (1946-89) 1990</p>	<p>(Tricolour)   Heraldic Flag</p>
<p><b>Slovenia</b></p> 	<p>As part of the Holy Roman Empire the Crown Land of <i>Carniola</i> was granted arms (white shield depicting a blue eagle with a red-white chequered crescent on its breast), exactly when remains unknown. The flag is a copy of the Russian tricolour with the arms combined from two coats of arms: the country of Celje (blue shield with three yellow stars) and the arms used during the communist regime from 1945 (blue and white wavy lines under the stylized three-peaked mountain of Triglav). The flag was introduced when independence from Yugoslavia was proclaimed in 1991.</p>	<p>1991</p>	<p>Heraldic Flag</p>
<p><b>Slovakia</b></p> 	<p>The coat of arms (a double-barred cross on the Carpathians originating in the 9<sup>th</sup> c.) appeared in 1848 (when Slovakia was part of Hungary). The coat of arms was given official recognition in 1918 in connection with the formation of Czechoslovakia. It has been claimed that the flag of Czechoslovakia adopted in 1920 was already in use in Slovakia in 1848. A white-blue-red tricolour was used by the fascist Republic 1939-45; and again after the Velvet Revolution in 1989, when moving towards independence (1993) the shield was added to the tricolour in 1992 to make the flag different from the Russian tricolour.</p>	<p>(1848) (1920) (1939-45) (1989) 1992</p>	<p>(Union flag)   Heraldic Flag</p>

The content of the tables above will be returned to in Chapter Three. At this point a few main observations are made under the heading below.

### 2.3 The Symbolic Regimes of Europe: continuity and narratives

The Middle Ages, the French Revolution, and World War One, are natural pivots for the categorisation of 'old', 'modern' and 'new' flags. The flags appearing in the

Middle Ages provide us with evidence of pre-modern loyalties, whereas the French Revolution and its aftermath is intimately linked with the formation of the modern nation. Several new states were also formed after World War One and new flags were established in connection with these.

There are two European prototypes: the Danish Cross flag and the Dutch Tricolour. These flags survived into modern times representing the modern nations. St. George's Cross of England is clearly a most influential flag, too, but less in terms of being a national flag. Modelled on the Dutch Tricolour, both the French and the Russian Tricolours have inspired the many Tricolours established in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The colours of the French tricolour have also influenced other flags, such as the Norwegian Cross flag. The colours red, white and blue have been recognised as the pan-Slavic colours, and were later associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century movement recognising a common ethnic background for the eastern, western and southern Slavs, a movement rejected by the competing national identities emerging in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

More specifically, the European flags may be categorised in accordance with their immediate origin as symbols of warfare, revolution, independence or state-reconstitution. Firstly, the earliest flags are symbols of *warfare* (of which some appeared as Cross flags or as naval flags), as in the cases of Denmark, Sweden, England, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Russia. Secondly, the flags of *revolutions* (and transformations) are those of France, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and the former Communist countries (variations on the Red Flag for the latter). Thirdly, the flags of *independence* include those of the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Finland, Bulgaria, Norway, Ireland, Poland, Lithuania, Estonia,



Latvia, Iceland, Croatia, and Slovenia<sup>70</sup>. Fourthly, several flags appear as flags of *state-reconstitution* with the formations of unions and with the dissolution of the empires as with the United Kingdom (the Union Jack), Romania, Finland, Austria, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Russia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The appearance of the flags is connected to the political context in which they appear, and they display through their mere existence (colours and design) claims of lineage, historical continuity and rights to a designated territory, passed from one generation to another often since time immemorial (see Chapter Three). They are also symbols of the complex and often lengthy process of nation-building.

The date of the exact adoption of a flag does not stand unchallenged. This is particularly the case with the older flags where records of early usage can be obscure. In these cases it is not the date of official adoption that is significant but the date when they were first employed. With the ‘old’ flags there is a particular problem dating the origin of the cross-flags and their colours, e.g. the flags of Denmark, Switzerland, England, Scotland, and Sweden which, according to tradition, stretch back many centuries.

Many countries with ‘modern’ flags may have used pre-modern flags, but the symbolic continuity was for various reasons broken to some extent. France is rich in pre-Revolutionary symbolism, but due to its severance with the past we find that the Tricolour appears in connection with the formation of the Republic. Spain is another

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<sup>70</sup> The flags of Ukraine and Belarus are also flags of independence.

case where dynastic flags existed long before the modern heraldic flag of Spain appeared in 1785, and an armorial banner was in use in Portugal before the Republic, with the present flag, was proclaimed as late as 1910.

There are also a number of 'modern' and 'new' flags, which appeared relatively early on the national stage but which due to existing empires, unions or foreign domination could not be adopted officially, for example, those of Norway, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania and Poland. In Austria the flag could be instituted only in 1918, with the formation of modern Austria after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

National flags reflect the political reality of nations, as evident from the examples provided in the foregoing tables. Flags are introduced and promulgated during, or after, significant national events. As a general rule, the history of the flag provides an understanding of the (subjective) history of the nation. Generally speaking, the major changes in the development and symbolism of European flags are connected to revolutions, occupations, attainment of independence, formation of unions; transformations from monarchies to republics (Netherlands, France, Italy, Russia) and vice versa (France 1814, Italy 1861); the communist domination (of the Baltic States, Central and Eastern Europe) and anti-communist transformations (with removal of communist emblems); and fascist (Italy and Germany and their satellite states during World War Two) and anti-fascist transformations (with national flags re-adopted). In short, we can say that the changes in symbolism take place when the associations between the symbol of the nation, the flag, and nationhood are re-negotiated.

In particular revolutions illustrate that flags survive over time only with the support from and resonance with the people. In this context we can also mention the Baltic States where earlier symbolic expressions of nationhood were connected to the short-lived experiences of independence in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, were only recently able to re-adopt their national flags. Compared to the Baltic States, nations such as Denmark, England, Sweden and the Netherlands display a remarkable symbolic continuity of uninterrupted nation building.

With many of the 'modern' and 'new' flags we find that the past they symbolise is of the utmost importance, and that a national heritage or a golden age often is claimed through heraldic influence or the choice of colours. When Poland, finally independent in 1918, adopted a new flag, it was based on the old coat of arms dating from the Polish-Lithuanian union (14<sup>th</sup> century). When independence was declared in 1918, Lithuania, too, originally revived a heraldic banner claimed to date from this period. Myths of heroism are connected to a number of flags, using the backing of an ancient past by means of particular colours and old heraldic designs. A myth of heroism is also related to the flag of Austria.<sup>71</sup>

Most countries of Central and Eastern Europe, due to the domination by the Soviet Union from World War Two to the early 1990s, have newly established flags. But some of them display 'old' elements in terms of the colours displayed on the present flags (Poland, Croatia, Czech Republic, and Slovakia). Other 'new' flags have 'modern' roots regarding their usage or design (Estonia and Latvia), whereas others

are related to the short-lived period of independence starting after World War One (Lithuania and Slovenia). Thus, the history of the flags is characterised by several changes and modifications connected to political situations.

The national flags of Europe also constitute 'brief national narratives' and can be classified in accordance with different symbolic groups or flag-families. Categorized in this way national expression provides a further understanding of national self-perception and claims of historically designated territories. The main flag types are: Cross Flags, Tricolours and Heraldic Flags. The third group is mainly composed of flags displaying heraldic colours or the part of the coat of arms. Clearly, both Cross Flags and Tricolours may have been influenced by earlier coat of arms and livery colours. These two groups, however, appear in a different political and symbolic context and were adopted for their religious (cross flags) or political aims (tricolours) with specific colours and designs arranged in a specific pattern, as opposed to heraldic flags where the emblem (or colour) displayed constitute the central element of the flag, which was often adopted later. These three flag types have originated in different periods of time and are linked by common traditions, something to be discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

## **2.4 National Symbols and Nation-building: Case Studies**

In order to explore in detail various symbolic paths towards the establishment of a national flag and the process of nationbuilding, we turn to the cases of Britain, France and Norway. The cases will be presented in order of appearance of their

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<sup>71</sup> As mentioned earlier, King Henry VI supposedly granted Duke Leopold V his colours (red shield with a white horizontal stripe) after the Battle of Acre (Ptolemais) in 1191, because his tunic was drenched in blood, except for the white area beneath his belt.

national flags, and with their distinctiveness in mind, and in Chapter Four, we will again look at these cases in terms of the ceremonies associated with their national days. The first case examined, Britain, constitutes a combination of ‘old’ cross flags, whereas France despite its rich pre-Revolutionary symbolism hoists a ‘modern’ Tricolour. Norway, flies a relatively ‘new’ national flag with modern roots.<sup>72</sup> To describe the continuity and the ruptures in creating these symbolic expressions is to understand the complexity of the nation building process.

### 2.4.1 Britain

Whereas, internationally, the ‘Union Jack’ represents Britain, the individual flags of England, Wales and Scotland, are flown nationally within those territories. The cross-flags combined in the ‘Union Jack’ are considered in this presentation including St. Patrick’s Cross of Northern Ireland.<sup>73</sup> Although comprising several nations, Britain can in terms of its symbolic and ceremonial expression be considered to possess a national ‘quality’.

The ‘Union Jack’ is both a union-flag and a cross-flag, being a composite of the Cross of St. George of England (the red cross on a white background), the Cross of

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<sup>72</sup> If the national ‘age’ is at all to be estimated, the continuity and ruptures in national symbolism serve as an indicator. Britain, France and Norway belong to different ‘symbolic regimes’, determined by when their national flags appear. Britain displays symbolism of an ‘old’ symbolic regime, whereas France employs ‘modern’ symbolism. Norway appears officially towards the end of the ‘modern’ period (or just before the ‘new’ symbolic regime), but its symbolism has ‘modern’ roots. For a related discussion about nation and state formation see Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 1993; Hroch, “National Self-Determination from a Historical Perspective”, 1995: 65-82; Hroch, “From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe”, 1996: 60-78; Orridge, “Varieties of Nationalism”, 1981; Plamenatz, “Two types of Nationalism”, 1976:22-37; Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300*, 1997; Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Political Nationalism*, 1977; Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*. 1975; Tivey (ed.), *The Nation-State: the formation of modern politics*, 1981

<sup>73</sup> The ‘Union Jack’ represents the United Kingdom that is England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. However, due to the complexity of Northern Irish

St. Andrew of Scotland (the white diagonal cross on blue background) and the Cross of St. Patrick of Northern Ireland (red diagonal cross on white background). The Welsh Dragon (the Ddraig Goch, red dragon on a white-over-green field), on the other hand, is not represented in the British flag. Although the white and green colours in the Welsh flag have old roots as the livery colours of the Tudors, the flag was officially recognised only in the 1950s, which is one reason for its exclusion on the Union Jack.<sup>74</sup>

St. George's Cross, as an emblem, can be traced back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, when in 1348 Edward III made St. George the patron saint of the Order of the Garter. Later, after the Battle of Agincourt in 1415, Henry V ordered all soldiers siding with the English in military action to wear a band of St. George. The earliest reference to the distinct Saltire (diagonal) Cross of St. Andrew is claimed to date from the 8<sup>th</sup> century, while its colours evolved four centuries later, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>75</sup> Regarding the Cross of St. Patrick (Northern Ireland), it has been suggested that the red saltire originated from the arms of the Geraldines, one of the influential Anglo-Irish families sent to Ireland to represent Henry II of England. The Cross, which appeared in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, had a prominent place in their arms.<sup>76</sup>

The creation of the 'Union Jack' was initiated during what can be considered a new era of British national flags, after the succession of the Stuart dynasty to the throne and during the growth of British naval power. The first reference to the Union flag dates from a proclamation of 12 April 1606 declaring the personal union of the

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symbolism and ceremonies, this study is restricted to Britain. The Cross of St. Patrick, as part of the Union Jack will nevertheless be considered.

<sup>74</sup> Stilling, "Wales: Ddraig Goch (Red Dragon)", <http://fotw.digibel.be/flags/gb-wales.html>, 1995

<sup>75</sup> Smith, "United Kingdom: The Noble Lineage of the Union Jack", 1975:180-189

crowns of Scotland and England, when King James VI of Scotland (1567-1625) ascended the English throne, thereby becoming James I of Great Britain (1603-25). The design of the first union flag was formed by superimposing the Red Cross of England on top of the White Saltire of Scotland. However, the flags of England and Scotland continued to be flown separately on land. The use of the first union flag (uniting the crosses of England and Scotland) remained restricted, being allowed only at sea from 1634 onwards on ships in the Royal Navy.<sup>77</sup> For a period of two hundred years, a great variety of ensigns<sup>78</sup>, jacks and pennants<sup>79</sup> were devised, and all were essentially variations of the Union Jack displaying the recognised British colours. In the period known as the Protectorate (1649-60) the well-known golden Irish harp was also displayed in one variation of the union flag. It was, however, removed with the restoration of Charles II in 1660.<sup>80</sup>

In the Act of Union (1707), by which England and Scotland joined together as the United Kingdom, the two combined crosses were officially recognised in order to reflect the preceding political events. After the union with Ireland in 1800 the final design of the Union Jack, where the Cross of St. Patrick was counter-charged (counterbalanced) with the Scottish Saltire, was adopted on 1 January 1801. To preserve the former cross flags and to manage the incorporation of St. Patrick's Cross (red diagonal cross on white), the heraldic advisers to the King suggested that St Andrew's Cross should be divided diagonally and red appear below and above the white (on the hoist half of the fly and above on its fly half). In accordance with

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<sup>76</sup> Devereux, 1992

<sup>77</sup> Notholt, "United Kingdom: History of the flag". <http://fotw.digibel.be/flags/gb.html#hist>, 1996

<sup>78</sup> An ensign is a flag flown at the stern of a ship, while jacks are flown at its bows.

<sup>79</sup> A pennant is a tapering flag - it may be swallow-tailed - used as a rank-signifier or for some similar function.

<sup>80</sup> Smith, "Flag of the United Kingdom". 2004.

heraldic law the red cross may not border the blue background, so a white narrow border, or fimbriation, was added in between. This also held for the centre where a white border separated the crosses of St. Patrick and St. George.<sup>81</sup> The Union Jack has remained unchanged ever since. By an Order in Council of 9 July 1864 the present official system of flags was confirmed. The name 'Union Jack' also became the official name for the flag in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Other flags of Britain include the Civil or Red Ensign (red with the Union Jack in the first quarter) used at sea, the Government or the Blue Ensign (blue with the Union Jack in the first quarter) reserved for government vessels, and the Naval or White Ensign (the cross of St. George with the Union Jack in the canton) used by the Royal Navy. The Royal Standard displaying two quarters of three golden lions on red and two quarters, one with the Irish golden harp on blue and the other with the Scottish rampant red lion on yellow, ought to be mentioned as the design is the same as that of the national arms. The Royal Standard is the flag of the head of state and the banner refers to the monarch's arms of dominion (excluding Wales). Its present form has been dated back to the accession of Victoria as Queen of the Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, on June 20, 1837.<sup>82</sup>

No other flags in British flag history have ever rivalled the Union Jack<sup>83</sup>. The flag began as a distinguishing flag of a ship, as an auxiliary of the principal flag, and evolved into the main flag of Britain and its empire. Today the Union Jack is flown for government and military purposes and, at sea, as the flag of the Royal Navy. It is also used by the public. Traditionally the Union Jack has also been incorporated into

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<sup>81</sup> Smith, "United Kingdom: The Noble Lineage of the Union Jack". 1975:180-189



other flags, as authorised in civil, governmental, military, naval or royal contexts. The Union Jack is, for example, displayed in the canton of the British Blue Ensign and the British Red Ensign. It also constitutes part of the flags of the Commonwealth nations such as Australia (and its states New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia), New Zealand and Tuvalu; and, in addition, of the U.S. State of Hawaii and the three Canadian states of British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario.<sup>84</sup>

#### 2.4.2 France

The French Tricolour (vertical of blue, white and red) has had a turbulent past, but from the Third Republic (1870-1940) onwards the flag with its colours was established as the national flag.

The Tricolour is claimed to be a combination of pre-Revolutionary flags of France: the blue of the cloak of St. Martin and the Banner of France, the white of Joan of Arc and the Bourbons, and the red of Charlemagne and St. Denis.<sup>85</sup> The earliest standard claimed by the French was the blue cloak of the 4<sup>th</sup> century bishop and patron saint of France, Saint Martin. The cloak of St. Martin became famous as an aid to military success at the battle of Vouillé in 507 and was later, with replaced replica cloaks, used as a war-flag. In whatever form or origin, the tradition of St. Martin's cloak as a vexilloid ended with the defeat suffered by the French at the Battle of Poitiers in 1356. In competition with the war flag of St. Martin, the French also used the imperial golden red oriflamme with six gold discs (possibly roses)

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<sup>82</sup> Crampton, 1989; Pedersen, 1992

<sup>83</sup> Campbell, 1992; Smith, 1975; Smith, 2004

<sup>84</sup> Smith, "Flag of the United Kingdom". 2004

bordered in dark blue and red, and with a flamelike tail at its end, the so called Montjoie of Charlemagne. According to tradition, the oriflamme was used by Charlemagne as a symbol of his empire. Suggested, but also contested, is a symbolic continuity existing between the red, white and blue colours of a tassel below the spearhead of the flag of Charlemagne and the Tricolour. Physically similar was another oriflamme associated with St. Denis, the first bishop of Paris. This red oriflamme, first chosen as a warflag by King Louis VI in 1124, was carried during four Crusades and seventeen other wars. Its career ended in a dramatic French defeat by the English at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. The oriflamme of St. Denis was matched by the Banner of France, the royal flag that displayed the golden fleurs-de-lis on a square blue field. Evidence supports this banner being in use under King Louis VI (reigning 1108-1137). Later, under Charles VI (reigning 1380-1422), the fleurs-de-lis were reduced to three in honour of the Holy Trinity. Although considered as the personal emblem of the king, it figured in battles from the Crusades onward. The Banner of France ranks, together with the war flag of the Holy Roman Empire (black eagle on gold) and the armorial banner<sup>86</sup> of England (three gold lions on red), among the most famous heraldic banners of the Middle Ages.<sup>87</sup>

White emerged as a French colour during the 15<sup>th</sup> century under the influences of Joan of Arc and the House of Orléans. When Joan of Arc was standing trial for heresy and sorcery in 1431, she described her banner as a field sprinkled with lilies according to legend. The flag was meant to represent the world, protected by an

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<sup>85</sup> Smith, "France: From the Oriflamme to the Tricolour".1975:130-139

<sup>86</sup> An armorial banner is a flag where (the shield of) a coat of arms has been made into a flag.

angel on each side, and with the inscription 'Jhesus Maria' above three fleurs-de-lis. The flag, which on the reverse shows the arms of France, has also been described as representing God giving his blessing to a lily. The standard of Joan of Arc is important in the vexillological history of France. It was to a great extent through its influence, from shortly after Joan's death in 1431 until the French Revolution of 1789, that white came to serve as the principal French national colour. In 1590, white had gained added strength at the Battle of Ivry, where Henry IV is said to have employed his white scarf as a flag and as a symbol of the French struggle against the Holy League. White was also used in various forms and shapes in the personal livery of the kings of France. Furthermore, during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, white, having spread from a few royal flags, in form of a cross or as a background colour, became the predominant flag colour of French military flags both on land and at sea.<sup>88</sup> This predominance lasted until 1794, and was briefly revived between 1815 and 1830.

Several flags were used to demonstrate loyalty to a pre-modern France, which is noticeable from a print of the warship *La Couronne* in 1636 that carried no less than five flags.<sup>89</sup> This suggests that standardised designs were yet not in place. Besides, individual flags of red, white, and blue had been established in France a long time before the Revolution, and combinations of these three colours had also been used in the royal livery in the past.

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<sup>87</sup> Originally, the banner of King Richard I depicted the three golden lions on red, a flag that has been traced back to 1195 when it represented England only. Smith, "France: From the Oriflamme to the Tricolour", 1975:130-139

<sup>88</sup> Smith, 1975:130-139

<sup>89</sup> Smith, 1975:134

Against such a complex background, the coat of arms of the city of Paris (blue and red), combined with white as a national colour, has been identified as the principal source of inspiration for the first Tricolour. The traditional colours of Paris, the colours of blue and red, were popular in revolutionary circles and the royal white of the Bourbon (also a colour used in memory of Joan of Arc) was often added to the flags. In July, 1789, the troops of the Paris Militia (later the National Guard) were required to wear cockades of the municipal blue and red. The combination of blue, red and white as recommended by Marquis de La Fayette was officially adopted in October 1789 as the colours of the cockade, then a most important political symbol. Red and blue had been used as early as 1358 when Parisian commoners revolted against royal authority.

Ironically, flags of plain white associated with the Bourbons were displayed the following year at the Festival of the Federation (to be elaborated on in Chapter Four) celebrating the first anniversary of the overthrow of the Bastille. The initiative for replacing white, recognised as a national but also royal colour of France, with red-white-blue came from the French navy which protested against having to fight for France under the old white flag, and demanded that the National Assembly should establish an official naval flag incorporating the three national colours. A law granting their wish was adopted in October 1790. Three-quarters of this new war ensign were still white, but its canton (the upper hoist quarter of the flag) displayed three vertical stripes of red-white-blue within a frame of the same colours, thus the reverse of the modern order. The design of this canton also served separately as the French Jack, flown at the bows of ships. A new system of army

colours was also devised in 1791 based on what had become the new national colours.

The final design of the Tricolour (blue, white and red), the first version of which had been introduced in 1789, dates from 1794. It was made by Jacques-Louis David on behalf of the Convention, when the French navy once again demanded alterations to the flag. The design exhibiting vertical stripes took shape as a direct result of the navy's protest to the National Assembly. The pattern was meant to correspond to the morals, ideas and principles of the Republic. But the predominance of the Tricolour at sea was not immediately matched on land.

The Tricolour has been abolished three times: at the short restoration of the French monarchy in 1814, Louis XVIII insisted on the supremacy of the white cockade and the white flag, but during his Hundred Days, Napoleon re-established the blue-white-red in 1815. After his defeat at Waterloo the white cockade and flag were instituted once again. The July Revolution of 1830, brought constitutionalism to the French monarchy and re-introduction of the colours of the Tricolour through a decree signed by King Louis Philippe. As a consequence of the revolution of 1848, which overthrew the monarchy, and wanted to introduce a plain red flag, a red rosette was added to the top of the Tricolour for a period of two weeks. Since 1848 there have been no official modifications to the national flag of France. During the Commune in 1871, however, the plain red flag tried to uphold French loyalty, and, afterwards, for a while, it seemed as if the white flag was to be re-established.<sup>90</sup> But, even though minor modifications of the colours blue, white, red and the relative

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<sup>90</sup> Smith, 1975: 130-138

widths of the stripes (varied from 1853 and formalised as equal in 1946) have been made over the years, one can see the strong symbolic continuity of the French Tricolour.

Other French flags include the President flag (a square Tricolour with a combined oak and olive tree in the centre), a tricolour flag for use at sea (with the stripes in the proportions 30:33:37), and the flag of the City of Paris (vertically blue and red [1:1] and at times with the ship-badge of Paris in white in the centre).<sup>91</sup> In contemporary France the Tricolour flies outside all public buildings and provides the backdrop for presidential addresses to the public. It is also interesting to note that the blue, white and red, with their associated values of Liberty, Fraternity and Equality and the symbol of *Marianne* (a personification of France and the triumph of the Republic, see illustration 1) were combined in 1999 in a state emblem in an effort to make the 'state more accessible' and symbolically unify all official correspondence with the public.<sup>92</sup> This new image or federating 'identifier' – combining the main symbols of France – was thus a 'new' creation by the French Government Departments and appears on all material, brochures, publications, letter headings, business cards, publicity campaigns and so forth, not only at the centralised but also at the decentralised level of government.

### 2.4.3 Norway

The history of the Norwegian flag is considerably shorter compared to the development of the Union Jack and the Tricolour, as the nation formation process started comparatively late in Norway. The Norwegian flag displays a white cross on

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<sup>91</sup> Crampton, 1989

a red background, with a blue cross superimposed on the white cross, a reversed form of the Icelandic version. It was inspired by the Danish cross, and by the colours of the French tricolour, and inspired, in turn, the flags of Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

Norway's history is closely linked with the neighbouring kingdoms of Sweden and Denmark. Norway had been joined to Sweden in 1319. From 1380 onwards Norway and Denmark were a single unified state. However, the Treaty of Kiel (14 January 1814) changed the conditions. During the Napoleonic wars, Sweden and its Crown Prince, ex-Marshal of France, had taken part in the victorious alliance against Napoleon, whereas Denmark, which had sided with France, lost Norway to Sweden.

The Danish flag had been in use for a long time in Norway, and Norway tried to achieve independence in 1814 under a red flag with a white cross like the Danish flag, with the Norwegian arms (a golden crowned lion holding an axe<sup>93</sup>) in the canton. This flag had been created by the Crown Prince Christian Frederick and was introduced on 27 February 1814. Its composition was a way of expressing opposition to Swedish rule.<sup>94</sup> When Norway entered the union with Sweden in 1814 (which lasted until 1905), the country was restricted to using the Swedish flag with a distinctive canton. Generally, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century - exception being made only for coastal water ships - the Norwegian cross flag was to be used officially

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<sup>92</sup> French Embassy Website: <http://www.info-france-usa.org/atoz/marianne.asp>. 2000

<sup>93</sup> The coat of arms of Norway has been claimed to date from 1230. However, the current legislation with regard to the coat of arms is from 1937. Nelson. "Norway State Arms". FOTW, [http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/no\).html](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/no).html), 2004

<sup>94</sup> Nevéus, "Interaction in heraldry between Norway and Sweden", *Genealogica et Heraldica*. 1998; 413-418; Engene, "Norway: First Flag of Independence 1814", FOTW, <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/no-hrank.html#1814>, 1997

only with a 'union mark' in the canton, consisting of the combined crosses of Sweden and Norway.

The present flag dates from 1821 when it was adopted by the Norwegian parliament. The flag was designed by Frederik Meltzer who, influenced by the colours of the French Tricolour, overlaid a blue cross on the white Danish cross on red. The adoption of the distinct Norwegian flag resulted in a seventy-seven year long struggle between the Norwegian and Swedish parliaments as Norway tried to receive Swedish governmental recognition for the flag. This recognition was refused repeatedly, but in 1838 the use of the flag was allowed at sea; the sanction, however, came with a warning that Norwegian ships could not expect to receive protection if they did not fly the official union flag of Sweden-Norway.

When Oscar I became King of Sweden in 1844, he established a new 'union emblem' in which the crosses of Norway and Sweden were combined in the canton of the flag. This meant that both countries could fly their own flags with the 'union symbol' in the canton.<sup>95</sup> Some recognition was hereby given to the Norwegian flag although it was never officially acknowledged. The negative associations of the flag and its composition gave rise to the derogatory nick-name the 'herring salad'. In the continuous struggle for an independent Norway, the Norwegian parliament kept on passing laws in 1893, in 1896 and finally in 1898 that intended the removal of the union emblem. In the end the Swedish King had no choice but to accept the law by

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<sup>95</sup> Engene, "Norway Historic Flags: National War Ensign, Union Flags 1844".<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/no-hrank.html#1814>, 1997



adding a provision to the constitution, and the Norwegian flag was signed into effect on 15 December 1899.<sup>96</sup>

As Norway gained full independence in 1905, the design of 1821 was officially recognised as the national flag. The same year the combination of lion and axe was adopted as the royal standard and national arms. Other Norwegian flags include the Royal Standard (red with the lion and axe in gold)<sup>97</sup>, the Naval Ensign (like the national flag but swallow-tailed), and the Flag of the City of Oslo (four horizontal stripes of blue and white).<sup>98</sup>

## **2.5 Concluding remarks**

The aim of this chapter has been to explore the link between pre-modern forms of communal symbolism and nationalism, to decipher the general pattern of European symbolism and its implications, and to investigate the complexity of the nation building process by the examination of the British, French and Norwegian flags. A few concluding remarks on those issues are added here.

Society involves co-operative action, and this is impossible without communication, which, in turn, depends on a common medium of discourse.<sup>99</sup> National flags have ‘prescribed arrangements’, and constitute therefore a powerful instrument for communication and participation. This is one reason why flags are not merely

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<sup>96</sup> FOTW, “Kingdom of Norway”, <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/no.html>, 2005; Smith, “Flag of Norway”, 2004; Smith, “Kingdom of Norway”. 1975: 269

<sup>97</sup> FOTW, “Norwegian Royal Standard”. <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/no-royal.html>. 2003

<sup>98</sup> Crampton, 1989; Devereux, 1992

<sup>99</sup> Smith, 1975:42

colourful ornaments. Instead, identification and representation are the key functions of the earliest kinds of symbolism.

Symbolic devices have been employed to identify groups and territories throughout history, while, at the same time, they have been used symbolically to differentiate communities from one another: the relationship between 'us' and 'others' is intimately linked to communal forms of symbolism. The original use of the medieval cross flags, for example, adopted by many states (England, Denmark, Savoy, Spain, Milan, Padua, Genoa, Russia) was to symbolise a holy mission (Christianity) against 'others' (non-Christians). Some of these cross flags survived into modern times when they came to represent the national communities of, for example, England, Denmark, Switzerland and Sweden.

Nations cannot be dated in a precise manner. However national symbols, such as national flags, provide us with an indication when these communities started to assert themselves. From such a perspective it is useful to be able to account for, and interpret, the period when flags appear related to historical events and circumstances around this time. This has something to tell us about the complexity of the nationbuilding processes and the symbolic continuity, which may or may not exist with regard to the national community of today. Symbolic discontinuity may therefore be interpreted as a sign of a period of political instability which has interfered, in one way or another, with the process of nation-building. Thus, some nations may then have been represented by symbolism of early unions or connected to them as part of empires, but they may have developed wholly independent symbolic regimes of their own.

By looking at the origins and symbolism of the European flags something can also be said about the appearance of different symbolic regimes ('old', 'modern' and 'new') and types of flag (cross flags, tricolours and heraldic flags). (This is elaborated in greater detail in Chapter Three.) The adoption, changes or modifications in their symbolic representation indicate that flags have been established as the political symbol par excellence, and are central to the process of nation building and in the expression of nationhood. As regards the origins of the European flags it is significant that they became attached to their national communities as symbols of warfare, revolution, independence and state reconstitution. National flags and their use, especially since the French Revolution in Europe may be described as 'graphic demonstrations of political programs'<sup>100</sup>.

In the case studies three different processes of nation-building were accounted for by means of exploring the origins of the national flags. The 'old' cross flags of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland were simply combined with the emergence of the political union, whereas France broke with its pre-Revolutionary past with the introduction of the Republican Tricolour. The Tricolour became a political symbol of utmost importance around which much controversy evolved in the decades after the Revolution. It also constituted the means by which the moral values of 'modern' France were expressed and asserted. The Norwegian flag was accepted only after a long struggle with Sweden and ultimately with the dissolution of the Union. In Norway the struggle for independence was simultaneous with the fight for recognition of the Norwegian flag, which had come to symbolise hope and resistance in the new nation. The examples of France and Norway are particularly

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<sup>100</sup> It was after 1789, with the attempts to change the socio-political structure, that the usage of

significant as they clearly illustrate how associations of nationhood may be expressed through the national flag.

The novelty of the 'national' flag, as compared to the earlier practices of identification, was that it reflected the egalitarian ideas of the modern nation, in contrast to the symbols of earlier societies. By definition, a national flag is available to all the citizens rather than to a small privileged group, or to special occasions or situations. Subsequently the flag became a subject of modification as the definition or identification of national goals, or the means of achieving these, altered.

Moreover, it is through the national flag that concepts such as 'independence', 'liberation' or 'freedom' may be 'waved'. The flag provides national groups with the means of expressing this 'independence' and of 'waving' their 'freedom' into action. The ways in which national flags are used allow for private associations and interpretations of the nation to be expressed, and they may also kindle affection and devotion. An analysis of the importance of national flags as symbols of belonging, their roles and the mechanisms by which they function, is developed in the following chapter.

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national flags spread over Europe and then to South America and finally to Asia, Africa and the Pacific. Smith, 1975: 104-105

## CHAPTER 3

### SYMBOLISM AND THE FORMS OF NATIONAL LIFE

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The objectives of this chapter are to analyse the various functions performed by national flags in order to understand why they have survived from pre-modern to modern times. Firstly, the ‘sacred’ character of national flags, attained through the ritualised contexts in which they appear will be explored, in order to evaluate how nations put flags into ‘action’. Secondly, the question why flags have become such important political symbols will be addressed. Thirdly, we shall consider whether national flags constitute powerful political tools or expressions of distinctiveness. Finally, a typology of the European national flags will be presented, in order to explore how the various flag designs serve as a decoding mechanism for different national narratives relating them to the ‘old’, ‘modern’ and ‘new’ symbolic regimes and the material presented in Chapter Two.

The national flag belongs to the number of collective images by which nation-states project and advertise themselves to their own nationals as well as to ‘others’. However, national flags have attained pre-eminence over other national symbols and are recognised as the national symbol *par excellence*. The sociological literature in general, and the literature on nationalism in particular, has become increasingly conscious of this, although the definition of a flag in a dictionary may read: “a piece of cloth, bunting, or similar material displaying the insignia of a community.”<sup>1</sup> The national flag is much more than a ‘piece of cloth’, and an exploration of its significance in the

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<sup>1</sup> “Flag”, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, <http://members.eb.com/bol/topic?eu=35082&sctn=4>, 2004

formation of national identities, and of the claims made by nations and/or states for nationhood, should start with what may be called an example of ‘practical Durkheimianism’. The following is an extract from a government publication explaining the origin, meaning and use of the symbols of the nation:

The National Flag, the National Anthem and the National Emblem are the three symbols through which an independent country proclaims its identity and sovereignty, and as such they command instantaneous respect and loyalty. In themselves they reflect the entire background, thought and culture of a nation.<sup>2</sup>

This quotation illustrates how flags matter as representations of national sovereignty, independence, and pride. The statement also acknowledges the importance of symbolically charged signs such as the national anthem and emblem, which are explored in their ceremonial context in Chapters Four and Five.

The question is: how is it possible that ‘a piece of cloth’ has had such a significant impact on the most important political and cultural institution in modern times – that is, the nation? The flag has proved to have such powerful symbolic value that people have been willing to sacrifice their lives for it. Durkheim addressed this point most effectively:

The soldier who dies for his flag, dies for his country; but as a matter of fact, in his own consciousness, it is the flag that has the first place. Whether one isolated standard remains in the hands of the enemy or not does not determine the fate of the country, yet the soldier allows himself to be killed to regain it. He loses sight of the fact that the flag is only a sign, and that it has no value in itself, but only brings to mind the reality that it represents; it is treated as if it were the reality itself.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Official Indian Government Report. Quoted from Firth, *Symbols Public and Private*, 1973: 34; Hobsbawm & Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. 1992: 11

<sup>3</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. 1976: 221

As pointed out earlier, the flag has ‘prescribed arrangements’ and “every flag is a communication from one person or group of people who may be received and responded to by others.”<sup>4</sup> The flag displays the values of the collectivity and facilitates active participation, and is not to be understood as a merely colourful decoration or insignificant expression of patriotism.

With this in mind, the general framework for this discussion can be outlined by looking at what Durkheim considered to be the elementary forms of social life. The specific functions of the national flag cannot be analysed before its ‘sacred’ nature and the ritualised contexts in which it appears have been explored.

### **3.1 ‘Sacred’ Objects**

Collective symbols represent collective systems of thought and action. They are essential in the process by which members of a society become conscious of their membership and act as the means by which the community ensures continuation. In traditional societies, the totem is the most important emblem of membership, and as such corresponds to the heraldic emblems (coat of arms, banners and flags) of modern nations, since these emblems constitute proof of identity and confirmation of membership. Durkheim states, the “collective totem is part of the civil status of each individual”.<sup>5</sup> There are primarily two criteria of group identity: a name (of the group) and a representative sign (the totem) that are significant indications of a degree of collective consciousness. Durkheim writes:

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<sup>4</sup> Smith, 1975:7, 42

<sup>5</sup> Durkheim, 1976:116

A clan is essentially a reunion of individuals who bear the same name and rally around the same sign. Take away the name and the sign which materializes it, and the clan is no longer representable. Since the group is possible only on this condition, both the institution of the emblem and the part it takes in the life of the group are thus explained.<sup>6</sup>

Symbols are created when meanings (ideas and values) are attached to concrete objects and these meanings or ideas and objects become closely united in our minds. Thus, when emotions are provoked by the nation they extend automatically to the flag, or vice versa. As a result, Durkheim concludes: “social life, in all its aspects and in every period of its history, is made possible only by a vast symbolism [...]. Collective sentiments can just as well become incarnate in persons and formulæ: some formulæ are flags, while there are persons, either real or mythical, which are symbols.”<sup>7</sup>

National symbols are of a ceremonial as well as a group-oriented character. The ritual context in which flags appear has a ‘religious’ or ‘quasi-religious’ structure. This means that they gain an authoritative, powerful or ‘sacred’ status which is connected to the ceremony’s capacity to ‘activate’ the flag in such a way as to inspire love of the country and respect for traditions. Feelings of membership are at their highest intensity, and the group is most conscious of its identity and boundaries when collective rituals are performed and ‘sacred’ symbols serve as reminders of individual membership. It is also during ritual interaction that the boundaries towards ‘others’ are clearly marked - a circumstance not highlighted by Durkheim. However, the discussion of national ceremonies will be postponed to Chapters Four and Five, where the functions of national holidays are explored.

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<sup>6</sup> Durkheim, 1976: 233



Marvin & Ingle's<sup>8</sup> study about blood sacrifice and the flag as the 'sacred totem' of the nation is relevant in this context, as it addresses the process whereby the nation sanctifies itself. The authors regard nationalism as a 'civic religion' of blood sacrifice. This means that the nation is more or less dependent on continual sacrifice, violence and war in order to guarantee national renewal and unity. Ultimately, it is blood sacrifice and the totem myth – the myth of justified violence defining 'us' versus 'them' – which hold society together. The paradox is obvious: nations may condemn violence, but require soldiers to kill in the name of the nation. The reason for this is simple: in multiethnic societies such as the United States, violence creates national solidarity and undermines ethnic solidarity, which could provide a rival focus for the nation and the worship of the national totem. Violence is the fuel or the 'generative heart' of the totem myth. The role of the flag as the totem is central in this sacrificial process:

The flag symbolizes the sacrificed body of the *citizen*. This label has meaning only in reference to the group that defines it, the *nation*. Blood sacrifice links the citizen to the nation. It is a ritual in the most profound sense, for it creates the nation from the flesh of its citizens. The flag is the sign and agent of the nation formed in blood sacrifice. Still, raising a piece of cloth and calling it a flag will not declare territory and form groups, at least not territory that will be respected, or groups that will endure and fight to produce borders. The power of a flag must be sacrificially established.<sup>9</sup>

It appears that the secret of the nation is that it constitutes a killing-machine which sends nationals to die, while the rest of the population constitute 'willing executioners'. However, lives must be sacrificed willingly: "A willing sacrifice is happy in his fate – the messianic sacrifice of the insider – turned – outsider is a sacred mystery that involves leaving the group through dying"<sup>10</sup>. Death is crucial in the process of defining

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<sup>7</sup> Durkheim, 1976: 231-32

<sup>8</sup> Marvin & Ingle have developed their framework with the American case in mind. Marvin & Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag*. 1999

<sup>9</sup> Marvin & Ingle, 1999: 63

<sup>10</sup> Marvin & Ingle, 1999:75

borders. This is because defending borders means that the nation is being ritually produced and reproduced: “The nation it produces is the shared memory of sacrifice, it is whatever is the last sacrifice that counts for group members.”<sup>11</sup> It is the borders and the defence of these that keep the killing organised and allocate the authority to kill. Moments of greatest uncertainty about the authority to kill are also marked by the greatest display of flags to make groups more certain of their identity. Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who challenged Boris Yeltsin in the first parliamentary elections after the collapse of the Soviet Union, opposed the newly established flags of the ‘new’ nations, associating such changes in symbolism with bloodshed. He stated: “They don’t understand that you have to pay with blood for this process.”<sup>12</sup>

It is true that the nation – via its totem, the flag – communicates a message about the loyalty and sacrifice it demands of the citizens in the name of the nation. However, communication is not a one-sided process as portrayed by Marvin & Ingle. The national totem conveys a message to outsiders and can constitute a threat, or a statement of power, and is a powerful tool for members of the nation to show discontent with governmental institutions and decisions. This is discussed further in-depth below.

Although the approach of the United Kingdom and the United States administrations to the war in Iraq in 2003 illustrates Marvin & Ingle’s point to a certain degree, it appears their argument is somewhat exaggerated. Certainly, the diversity of opinions and cultures within nations must be acknowledged, and wars have been essential for nation

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<sup>11</sup> Marvin & Ingle, 1999: 66

<sup>12</sup> Marvin & Ingle, 1999: 63

building throughout history as seen in the survey of European flags in Chapter Two. However, sacrifice and conflicts are not the only catalyst for nations to form or for the renewal of national unity. Borders are also established in other ways. In Marvin & Ingle's study the question 'what are the borders protecting?' is avoided, in a similar fashion to Anderson<sup>13</sup> who does not answer the question 'what is actually being imagined?'. If violence alone creates national solidarity, are we to understand that ethnic or civic ties have no influence? Existing ethnic and civic foundations of national identity are, in short, overlooked in the discussion. Naturally, concrete sacrifice may strengthen the nation as a moral community, but this can also be done symbolically as in the remembrance ceremonies for the war dead through the sacrifice of past generations. Examples may also be found where other factors clearly have been of importance in the nation formation process. For example, Switzerland opted to remain neutral in World War Two. The whole concept of 'neutrality' has in the Swiss case contributed to the strengthening of the civic society and constitutes a source of national pride and unity.

Generally speaking, Marvin & Ingle's analysis is a top-down analysis providing insights about how nationhood can be constructed. The emphasis is laid on governmental and media elites, but the ethnic and historic dimensions of nationhood are neglected. With regard to their study, the 'American Flag Folding Ceremony' and the 'Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag' must be mentioned. These two flag-related practices are excellent examples of how the nation sanctifies itself through its flag. The folding of the flag is an army and navy custom, but is also performed in schools. In that

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<sup>13</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 1991

ceremony, the flag is lowered and folded into the shape of a tri-cornered hat, which is associated with the soldiers who died fighting during the war of Independence. The

United States Defence Department explains:

The flag folding ceremony represents the same religious principles on which our country was originally founded. The portion of the flag denoting honor is the canton of blue containing the stars representing the states our veterans served in uniform [...] In the Armed Forces of the United States, at the ceremony of retreat the flag is lowered, folded in a triangle fold and kept under watch throughout the night as a tribute to our nation's honored dead. The next morning it is brought out and, at the ceremony of reveille, run aloft as a symbol of our belief in the resurrection of the body.<sup>14</sup> (For the ceremonies of Retreat and Reveille see Chapter Four.)

The following is also recited by students in schools: "I Pledge Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The flag is folded twelve times in a systematic manner, during which the following statement is read: "The first fold of our flag is a symbol of life. The second fold is a symbol of our belief in the eternal life. The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks who gave a portion of life for the defense of our country to attain a peace throughout the world. The fourth fold represents our weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace as well as in times of war for His divine guidance. The fifth fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right; but it is still our country, right or wrong." The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. The seventh fold is a tribute to our Armed Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic. The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered in to the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor mother, for whom it flies on mother's day. The ninth fold is a tribute to womanhood; for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great have been molded. The tenth fold is a tribute to father, for he, too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since they were first born. The eleventh fold, in the eyes of a Hebrew citizen, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon, and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The twelfth fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost. When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, 'In God we Trust'." See: U.S. Department of Defense, The Uniformed Services, "Flag-Folding", Quotation taken from The Flag of the United States of America Website, <http://www.usflag.org/foldflag.html>; U.S. Defense Department, The Uniformed Services, "Flag Folding Ceremony", quoted on the Website U.S.A Patriotism: [http://www.usa-patriotism.com/reference/flag\\_folding.htm](http://www.usa-patriotism.com/reference/flag_folding.htm)

<sup>15</sup> The first version of "The Pledge to the Flag" was published in 1892 by a youth magazine "The Youth's Companion" for the commemoration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America on 11 October, 1892. See The Flag of the United States of America Website, <http://www.usflag.org>.

These flag ceremonies are in form, and to some extent in content, similar to the Declaration of Faith read aloud by the congregation at a Sunday mass. The links between the ceremonial forms of a religious group and a national community are, as illustrated in the above, closely related and highlight the way in which the nation sanctifies itself. This matter is considered in more depth in Chapter Five, when nationalism as ‘secularised’ form of religion is addressed.

A related and new practice, in which the notions of nationhood and citizenship are sanctified, although not to the same extent as above, is the ‘Citizenship Ceremony’ in Britain. Under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, all new British Citizens are required to attend. The central elements of this ceremony are the ‘Pledge of Loyalty to the United Kingdom’ and the ‘Oath of Allegiance’. The latter reads as follows:

I (name) swear by Almighty God that on becoming a British citizen, I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, her Heirs and Successors, according to law.<sup>16</sup>

These ceremonial statements are given in front of the Union Jack and the participants stand whilst singing the National Anthem, which closes the ceremony.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> An alternative, the ‘Affirmation of Allegiance’, can also be said: “I (name) do solemnly and sincerely affirm that on becoming a British citizen, I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, her Heirs and Successors, according to law.” This is followed by the ‘Pledge of Loyalty’: “I will give my loyalty to the United Kingdom and respect its rights and freedoms. I will uphold its democratic values. I will observe its laws faithfully and fulfill my duties and obligations as a British citizen.” Immigration & Nationality Directorate, Home Office, “English and citizenship to help integration and make people proud to be British”, [http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/news/archive/2003/september/english\\_and\\_citizenship.t extonly.html](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/news/archive/2003/september/english_and_citizenship.t extonly.html); Home Office Official Website “First citizenship ceremony to take place!”, 2 Feb, 2004 ”[http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/news/archive/2004/february/first\\_citizenship.html](http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/news/archive/2004/february/first_citizenship.html)

<sup>17</sup> The Citizenship Ceremony was part of the Government reforms of making the process of becoming a British citizen “meaningful and celebratory”, and has been described in the following terms: “The Citizenship Ceremony is a rite of passage, that formally welcomes those who wish to join us into full

The national flag may also acquire a 'sacred' meaning in other national practices. Symbols are intimately connected with the context in which they appear. The flag may be used to bring its audience solemn associations by its use on a coffin or as a memorial token in military processions or on memorial days.<sup>18</sup> When involved in funerals, as is the case in Scandinavia, the national flag is at half-mast as the mourners arrive at church and is raised when they leave. In this context, the flag takes on a 'sacred' meaning with its reference to resurrection. These are a few examples of how the flag, representing the nation, connects the past, the future and the individual to the nation.

Related to the discussion of how the flag has acquired a 'sacred' meaning is the practice and symbolism associated with the national flag flying at 'Half Mast', a practice that clearly illustrates the emotional charge of the flag. Official flag days of mourning are indicative of this. The Dutch lower flags on Memorial Day (4 May), and the Belgians in 'Homage to the soldiers deceased during peace-keeping missions' (7 April).<sup>19</sup> In Latvia, the flags fly at half mast on Commemoration Day of Victims of Communist Terror (25 March and 14 June), on the date of the Occupation of the Republic of Latvia (17 June), and on Commemoration Day of Victims of Genocide against the Latvian People by the Totalitarian Communist Regime (7 December)<sup>20</sup>.

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membership of the British Family and into Citizenship of the United Kingdom." See: Home Office Ceremony Website, "What happens at a ceremony",  
[http://www.uknationality.gov.uk/british\\_citizenship/english/homepage](http://www.uknationality.gov.uk/british_citizenship/english/homepage)

<sup>18</sup> In the United States, the flags are given to family members of servicemen and soldiers who have died in service. The Flag of the United States of America Website, <http://www.usflag.org/flaquetique.html>

<sup>19</sup> FOTW, "Official Flag Days in the Netherlands", <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/nl.html#days> ; "Iceland – Flag Days", <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/is-days.html#day> ; "Official Flag Days in Belgium", <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/be-days.html>

<sup>20</sup> FOTW, "Official Flag Days in Latvia", <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/lv.html#days>

The powerful symbolism invested in the practice of flying flags at half-mast is demonstrated by the offence caused when this practice is not respected. In Britain, when Diana, Princess of Wales, died, the flags on all public buildings were at half mast except for the Union Jack flying atop Buckingham Palace where tradition stipulated that the flag should fly at full mast to mark the fact that Queen was in residence. The associations of the flag flying at full-mast as a sign of disrespect for the dead caused public outrage. As a result, tradition had to give way to public pressure, and the flag was finally lowered at the Palace under intense media coverage. The process did not stop there; to mark the first anniversary of Diana's death (31 August 1998), the Queen ruled that all flags at the royal residences should be lowered and half-masted as a special mark of respect. The British government declared immediately that they would follow suit.<sup>21</sup> The next section will continue to explore why national flags constitute such important political symbols.

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<sup>21</sup> The flag debate following Diana's death changed the previous flag custom. As a result, upon the announcements of the deaths of Princess Margaret (9 February 2002) and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (30 March 2002), the flag was immediately lowered at all royal residences even if the Queen was in residence. BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/138174.stm>, Thursday, July 23 1998

### 3.2 Political Symbolism: Expression and Control

Symbols operate in the overlapping fields of expressions, communication, knowledge and control.<sup>22</sup> Firstly, national flags when used as instruments of expression can “evoke powerful emotions of identification with a group and can be used as rallying points for group action”<sup>23</sup>. Many scholars in a Durkheimian tradition (Carlyle, Sapir, Nehru, Honigman, Boas, Linton, and Levi-Strauss) argue that symbols reinforce solidarity. Firth<sup>24</sup> contends that flags are prime vehicles for conveying attitudes or expressing sentiments, because simple actions, such as waving them, can imply complex themes of solidarity or loyalty. The usage of flags thereby allows individuals to show their belonging to a group, or involvement with a specific occasion.<sup>25</sup> The origins of the European national flags (in warfare, revolutions, independence and state-constitution) that were identified in Chapter Two confirm this.

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<sup>22</sup> Semiology is the study of signs and symbols, including semantics and all forms of verbal and non-verbal communication. The general categorisation of symbolism is derived from the category of ‘signs’ within which four main types can be differentiated: (1) Index refers to a sequential relationship, where the index constitutes one of the parts, precedent or antecedent, particular to general. (2) A signal emphasises ‘consequential action’, i.e. it is a sign that expects a response. This is a more complex form of an index. (3) Icon is constructed as a physical and imaginative representation, and a sensory likeness is intended. (4) Symbol is the most complex of the four types of signs as series of meanings and associations are attached to it. However, there is no obvious sensory likeness between the symbol and the object it represents; instead the relationship may seem quite arbitrary. The most obvious example in this fourth category is the relationship between the national flag and its nation – for the ‘insider’ as complex as it may seem arbitrary for the ‘outsider’. These categories are by no means clear-cut. In consequence we find that an object such as the Red Flag can be a signal of ‘danger’ or a symbol of revolution depending on the context. In accordance with this fourfold categorisation of signs, national flags can be either signals or symbols. In their capacity as ‘signals’, their meaning is derived from the structural context, but as symbols they convey different messages. A message can, for example, be conveyed of the identity or rank of an individual or a group. Royal Banners or Presidential flags are examples of this. See Firth, *Symbols Public and Private*, 1973:74-75

<sup>23</sup> Firth, *Symbols Public and Private*. 1973:77

<sup>24</sup> Firth, 1973

<sup>25</sup> In an interesting anecdote, Firth tells us that the Chicago Tribune, describing itself as ‘the American paper for Americans’ bears the image of the U.S flag over its title or headline on every issue. Moreover, every day for about a decade the Chicago Tribune published a photograph of ‘Today’s Flag’ flying outside a private or official residence.



Secondly, national flags communicate a certain meaning – contemporary as well as historic, so communication symbols can serve as stores of meaning over time.<sup>26</sup> Highly significant is the simultaneous communication to ‘others’. The national flag is a symbol for its own citizens because it constitutes a symbolic boundary of ‘not belonging’ for others. In terms of communication or signalling, the expression ‘showing the flag’ is still used metaphorically. The expression, as we know, originated from the practice of naval vessels showing their intentions (friendly or otherwise) at sea when entering foreign waters.

Thirdly, national flags are containers of ‘knowledge’ with a manifold character. A symbol, however, does not provide a route to ‘real’ knowledge. Traditionally, the 19<sup>th</sup> century poets provide examples illustrating how sentiments of nationality are closely connected with national flags. Their national enthusiasm can be illustrated by a quote from Thomas Campbell: “Ye mariners of England that guard our native seas whose flag has braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze”<sup>27</sup>. What is very interesting about this verse is that, apart from pointing to the sentiments towards the homeland, it completely ignores the fact that the flag in question is certainly not the same over the whole period. We may also expect some interesting verses to be remembered about the golden days of the British Empire when the Union Jack was flown over vast areas of the globe, as romanticised in Rudyard Kipling’s lines about the British Empire: “Never

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<sup>26</sup> German war memorials refer to both past and present: achieving the status or ‘virtue of permanence’.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Campbell (*Ye Mariners of England*). In Firth, 1973: 343

was isle so little, never was sea so long. But over the scud and palm-trees an English Flag was flown.”<sup>28</sup>

Fourthly, symbols may also be used as means of controlling social order and as tools of propaganda. The reasons why national flags have become such powerful political symbols will be explored under the heading below.

### 3.2.1 National Flags as Political Instruments

Whitney Smith<sup>29</sup> has successfully legitimised the study of flags as central political symbols, and political symbolism as a discipline worthy of academic pursuit, as well as illuminated the earlier shortcomings of social sciences in this area. He concentrates on symbolism as an essential element of political life, directly involved in the political culture, authority, unity, stability, change, demand and response by elites and peoples.

In an extended function and form, symbols can be classified into four different types: verbal, graphic, active and concrete symbols.<sup>30</sup> These categories refer to the context in which the symbols operate, and the most potent symbols are those which combine all four aspects of symbolism, as is the case with the national flag. First of all, ‘verbal

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<sup>28</sup> Rudyard Kipling (*The English Flag*). In Firth, 1973: 343

<sup>29</sup> Smith, in true Durkheimian fashion, links the totem of traditional societies to the flags of modern nations. The ‘sacred’ nature of the totem in traditional societies consisted of the channels it provided to the gods, ancestors or more generally to nature. This belief is of vital importance since these channels were the sources of power for the group, and legitimate power could only be exercised when sanctioned through them. The ‘totem’ gradually lost its religious character, through the division of labour and by the separation of the political, religious and economic spheres. As this happened, the totem of traditional kinship started to represent people living in a certain geographical area. Moreover, symbolism is a universal and permanent aspect of society, and it is a mistake to overlook its importance by reducing it to an issue of decoration. Smith, *Prolegomena to the Study of Political Symbols*. 1969: 96-115

symbols' convey their meaning through the written or spoken word, for example in a propaganda pamphlet, through the national anthem or through oaths of allegiance, speeches, slogans, mottoes, ideologies, historic sayings, documents, myths, tales and music – all of which have an auditory or visual impact. Books, periodicals, television, radio and the Internet are all distributors of verbal symbols. A fascinating example was the new Revolutionary calendar with new 'rational names' created in 1792 in order to evoke a revolutionary consciousness in the masses in France.<sup>31</sup>

Secondly, 'graphic symbols' involve the use of illustrative material, colours and patterns, whereas the medium in itself is of secondary importance. The design conveys the meaning regardless of where it is represented. Well-known symbols of this type are the cross, the swastika, the hammer and sickle, and the star. The design and/or colours together with a specific material can also produce a number of related symbolic forms, such as coats of arms, seals, medals, decorations, uniforms, posters, armbands, cockades and flags.<sup>32</sup> Verbal and graphic symbols are often found in conjunction with each other and the latter reinforce the former. In Chapter Two the combination of verbal and graphic symbolism was indicated on the Red flags of the Baltic States during the period 1945-53 when the initials of their Republics were displayed together with the hammer and sickle emblem.

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<sup>30</sup> See Smith, 1969: 80-92

<sup>31</sup> Smith, 1969:92

<sup>32</sup> In the context of nationalism, the use of colours has been increasingly important. The Nazi Brown Shirts and the red shirts of the supporters of Garibaldi, for example, illustrate this. See also Smith, 1975:34-36

Thirdly, 'active' symbolism refers to motion as the essential element. The national flag can be an 'active' symbol on national days, coronations and royal weddings, and in parades, parliamentary debates, salutes, ceremonials, rituals, memorials and subtly in everyday procedures in the legislature. A specific example is the saluting of the flag, or standing up when singing the national anthem. The role of symbols in ceremonies is examined in Chapter Five.

Finally, 'concrete symbols' refer to any objects that in addition to their practical purposes have been imbued with a special symbolic meaning, such as specific buildings or mountains for reverent pilgrims, or other ordinary objects which acquire a mystic force. Concrete symbols are permanent, less flexible and subtler in the way they exert influence. The capital city with its architecture and history has often had a profound impact on the process of nation building and is an example of this type of symbolism. The capital city provides a 'mythical' space for national ceremonies, in which the flag plays an important role.

As a comparison, religious worshippers gather in a church (concrete symbol), decorated with crucifixes and icons (graphic symbols), whilst performing religious rituals (active symbols). Holy Scriptures as the foundation for the faith constitute a verbal symbol, around which active symbolism takes place in the rituals being performed. These four categories, verbal, graphic, active and concrete symbols, are not clear-cut, which is more or less the point as the most potent symbols are those that combine all these aspects of symbolism. The national flag is a graphic symbol and constitutes an essential

part of active or concrete symbolism. The word 'flag', its synonyms and associated terms, are also verbal symbols of great potency:

... flags are and have been since the earliest days of recorded history a vital element in political (as well as military and religious) situations of the most diverse kind, including ones of paramount importance –the assertion of identity by an individual, group, or political entity; the coercion of masses on particular questions; the glorification and sanctification of the state [...] With the rise of nationalism as a main current in world politics over the past two hundred years, flags have come to occupy one of the positions in the very front ranks of symbols utilised by actors in the political system.<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, flags have attained prominence over all other forms of national symbolism, due to their flexibility, plasticity, simplicity and effectiveness. Flags are mobile and flexible objects and can be employed for a diversity of reasons and purposes, such as representing and identifying the nation and its members. As flexible symbols their importance increases. There are

... those [flags] which honour or dishonour, warn or encourage, threaten or promise, exalt or condemn, commemorate or deny; those which remind or incite or defy the child in school, the soldier, the voter, the enemy, the ally, and the stranger; those which authenticate a claim or dramatize a political demand or help to establish a common framework within which interest groups are willing to confront one another and work out mutually agreeable solutions.<sup>34</sup>

Because of their plasticity, national flags can attract the attention of the members of the community. Specific messages of a political nature can hereby be passed on to people, not only on the traditional battlefield or at sea, but outdoors in public spaces, streets and squares, and indoors, in meetings, in schoolrooms and in national ceremonies. Flags are also compact and simple at the same time. Their compactness is illustrated by the intensive notion of nationhood displayed through colours and designs. Their simplicity, with regard to form, makes them easy to identify and reproduce. As pointed out by Smith, the flag is an effective medium, regardless of the level of literacy or political

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<sup>33</sup> Smith, 1969:94-95

<sup>34</sup> Smith, 1969: 95-96

sophistication of the collectivity. This point of view is illustrated by the development of flags, from the first vexilloids to the modern national flags, expressing unity through the patterns of ceremonies and identity through the contrast of 'our' design in comparison to that of 'others'. A good example is the banner presented by the Pope to William the Conqueror before his invasion of England. The objective of this exchange was to legitimise power. The cross depicted on this banner symbolised Christian victory, and it was the symbol of the power of the Roman Catholic Church. From the 11<sup>th</sup> century, onwards, the cross started to identify Christians in the Crusades, and thereafter it took on a more secular meaning as a symbol of the worldly power of the Christian Emperor.<sup>35</sup> It is in this context the development of Cross flags into the national flags of England, Scotland, Scotland and Sweden is located.

The intensification of the usage of flags in Europe during the French Revolution and the demand for symbolism with the emergence of the new concepts of nationhood must again be noted. The French Tricolour, and the Dutch Tricolour before that, constituted radical designs and represented a break with the monarchical pasts:

In graphic terms these flags and similar ones created elsewhere incarnated the nation, summed up its past heritage, its present status, its future aspirations. Lacking hereditary emblems but generally being composed of two or three colors in a simple geometric pattern, such flags readily attracted the attention and devotion of the masses. They came to represent everything antithetical to the old order – order, simplicity, equality, progress [sic]. In every country where loyalty to the Fatherland (or Motherland) has become a religion, the flag is its chief symbol.<sup>36</sup>

As regards the 'modern' and the 'new' flags accounted for in Chapter Two, from the introduction of the French Tricolour (1789) to the adoption of the Slovenian flag

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<sup>35</sup> The examples provided by Smith (1969), before the many political changes in Europe, provide many such interesting historical examples. See also Wescher, "Flags and their symbolism in the Middle Ages and in modern times". 1949: 2811-2812 in Smith. 1969:107

(1991), the origin of these European flags is of a highly political nature. Flags have continued to constitute important political symbols in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The use of flags and colours by the rival groups in the electoral dispute in Ukraine in 2005 is an example of this.<sup>37</sup>

Flags can also be subject to “conscious exploitation as a tool of coercion and propaganda”,<sup>38</sup> and a reduction of complicated national programmes into national slogans. A classic example is the copious symbolic production in Nazi Germany. The Swastika Flag of Nazi Germany was always present taking an ‘active’ role in mass demonstrations and as background references when speeches were delivered. Nazi authorities issued nearly 2,000 decrees against the Jewish population. The *Nuremberg Laws*<sup>39</sup> stipulated in paragraph 2:1 of the Citizenship Laws of the Reich: “Citizenship in the Reich is limited to those of German and related blood”<sup>40</sup>, and in paragraph 1:1 of the Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor: “Marriages between Jews and citizens of German or kindred blood are forbidden.”<sup>41</sup> It is highly significant that, in the context of citizenship and intermarriages, paragraph 4:1 dictated: “Jews are

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<sup>36</sup> Smith, 1969:111-112

<sup>37</sup> An interesting example is the outrage among Iraqis when Iraq’s United States-appointed leaders abolished the old Iraqi flag and introduced a new one. However, Hamid al-Kafaei, the spokesman for the Iraqi Governing Council, claimed: “This is a new era. We cannot continue with Saddam’s flag.” Cockburn & Osborne, “Burning With Anger: Iraqis Infuriated by New Flag That Was Designed in London”, 2004

<sup>38</sup> Smith, 1975:56

<sup>39</sup> Original German text in *Reichsgesetzblatt 1935, Teil I*

<sup>40</sup> *Reichsbürgergesetz* of September 15, 1935. Translation in Reich Law Gazette, 1935, Part 1. Available at: [<http://learning.dada.at/res/pdf/B006BT02E.PDF>]

<sup>41</sup> *Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre* of September 15, 1935. Translation in Reich Law Gazette, 1935, Part I, Available at: [<http://learning.dada.at/res/pdf/B006BT02E.PDF>]

forbidden to fly the Swastika national flag”.<sup>42</sup> The penalty for breaking the laws was officially penal servitude, imprisonment and/or imposition of a fine (paragraph 5). The Nuremberg Flag Law (Reich Flag Law), (extract above), was written with the intention to make the Law for the Protection of the National Symbols from May 1933 more specific.<sup>43</sup> Nazi Germany is an extreme example of how national symbolism, within a ritualised national and political calendar, can be used as a political tool of propaganda to intimidate opponents. Party propaganda was enforced through the recognisable design of the Swastika Flag and standards, which were reproduced in thousands and used in repeated large-scale parades and party rallies, emphasising uniformity and symbolising social cohesion.

Another example of an important political flag is the Red Flag, displayed by the former Soviet Union (red with the golden hammer and sickle emblem) and still used by China (red with a large yellow star and four smaller stars). The Red Flag was at the centre of extensive national ceremonies in the former Soviet Union. The sophistication of political symbolism and symbol manipulation became possible in the age of mass-politics. However, it is important to emphasise that flags can be used as political tools to distribute propaganda not only by totalitarian regimes; and that ‘propaganda’ is a matter of definition, although the cases above are most appropriate examples of this.

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<sup>42</sup> *Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre* of September 15, 1935, Translation in Reich Law Gazette 1935, Part I. Translation of the original document signed by the Führer and Chancellor of the Reich, Holocaust Exhibition, Imperial War Museum, London

<sup>43</sup> Sensen, “Post-War Germany 1945-49: Abolition of the Swastika”. FOTW: <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/de-1945.html>. 1997



It needs to be emphasised that flags, as political symbols, become objects of affection and devotion, and certain countries, such as Sweden and Austria, dedicate a Day in the honour of the Flag. An example of this affection is displayed on the annual commemoration of the Austrian Flag Day (26 October), when Austria remembers its sovereignty being restored in 1955. In the words of the former President Adolf Schaerf:

You must know and feel that this flag is not simply a common, every-day thing, taken for granted through its familiarity, but is a costly possession, the loss of which brings suffering and sorrow, to which one must always look with feelings of fidelity and love, and which one must guard for all time. You who were not yet born or were too young to remember the years between 1938 and 1945, cannot remember when Austria's flag was taken down, presumably forever, from the masts. Seven years later, as the red-white-red flag again flew proudly in the wind, announcing the rebirth of Austria, you rejoiced, but without really being able to experience this historical moment, this victory of historical justice. This is the reason why we yearly dedicate our commemorative thoughts to the Austrian flag, on the remembrance of the return of our complete freedom.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, this example may be interpreted as a form of political manipulation.

### 3.2.2 Controlling Political Symbols and Symbols of Dissent

Firth's<sup>45</sup> classical study on private and public symbols focuses on 'the symbolic disjunction' – the disjunction between face value and underlying meaning of symbols and symbolic behaviour. The flag is, on the one hand, a 'piece of cloth', but so rich in national associations that it may be respected as a 'sacred' object on the other.

It is through Durkheim's classic description of the soldier's alleged willingness to sacrifice his life for his flag (i.e. nation), that Firth emphasises the basic symbolic elements of flags. The specific object of the flag represents the very general object of

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<sup>44</sup> Adolf Schaerf was President of Austria 1957-65. Quote taken from Federal Ministry for Education and Cultural Affairs, "Austrian National Colours: Red-White-Red", 1990

the nation, and as sentiments are transferred from the general to the specific, the flag becomes an object of sentiment and affection. However, in contrast to Durkheim, Firth argues that the process of transferring sentiment to the flag is a highly complicated one and not necessarily spontaneous. The flag might be secondary in the soldier's consciousness, and the dying act can either be an act of leadership or a result of indoctrination. Symbols also tend to take shape in action, as illustrated by the image of the dying soldier in battle or by the practice flying flags in 'half-mast' as a symbol of national mourning earlier mentioned.<sup>46</sup> Firth concludes that national flags epitomise the power of symbolism, and thus constitute a category of their own:

Even more than regimental colours, school banners and other unit symbols, national flags tend to be assigned a quality of special reserve, removing them from the more sordid aspect of common handling. They represent 'society' much more, in its broadest political aspect.<sup>47</sup>

Firth maintains that symbols such as flags are instruments of power and control. As part of a ceremony or 'experiences in symbolic form'<sup>48</sup>, flags are prime objects of manipulating the masses on national occasions. Having said that, it must be acknowledged, as Firth does, that people react in different ways to various symbolic displays.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Firth, 1973

<sup>46</sup> Firth, 1973: 339-340

<sup>47</sup> Firth, 1973:340

<sup>48</sup> The concept of 'master symbols' proposed by Mills Wright (1961:36-1), and that of 'dominant symbols' conceived by Turner (see e.g. Dillistone, 1986: 110-114), are also relevant here. Master symbols, in terms of collective representations or symbols of justification, are used in an authoritative way to legitimise the position and actions of ruling elites. These include moral symbols that are widely believed in, such as 'sacred' emblems and legal formulae or evocations of the most widely respected national institutions such as the monarchy and the national flag, and they include general notions of 'destiny' and divine guidance. Firth. 1973:85

<sup>49</sup> Firth, 1973: 54-91

Here, another dimension of political symbolism must be addressed, namely the state control exercised through flag laws and through laws against acts of ‘desecration’ of the national flag. With regard to the composition of the flag we find that its design, shape, size, and cloth are all elements of the symbol controlled by the state and its institutions.<sup>50</sup>

The state not only controls which national flag is to be used but its usage of national flags as they appear on a number of places controlled by the state: embassies, vessels of war, airlines, national museums, national monuments, capital city squares and stationery. There is also a specific protocol involved in the use of national flags at the headquarters of the United Nations and the European Union. The state, too, specifies the days when the flag is to be flown in the practices of ‘official flag days’. For example, the national flag is used in Norway for no less than 15 official flag days throughout the year, including special celebrations of the Royal Family, Constitution Day, May Day, and Election Day.<sup>51</sup> In Sweden, the number of official flag days is 17, and include the National Day (Day of the Swedish Flag, 6 June) and Gustav Adolf Day (6 November) commemorating his death at the Battle of Lützen in 1632.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Flag laws identify the national flag, as for example, in the extract below taken from the 1995 flag law of Belarus: “The national flag of Belarus stands for the state sovereignty of Belarus, represents the rectangular panel which is consisting of two horizontally located color strips: top - red color of width in 2/3 and bottom - green color in 1/3 width of a flag. About a staff the Belarus national ornament of red color on the white field, constituting 1/9 lengths of a flag is vertically located.” Decree of the President of Belarus, June 7, 1995 N 214. In “Regulations About the national Flag of Belarus” and “Belarus – Flag Legislation”, [http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/by\\_law.html#2004](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/by_law.html#2004)

<sup>51</sup> Swedish Institute, “The National Emblems of Sweden”, 1997

<sup>52</sup> FOTW, “Flag Days - Sweden”, <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/se-fdays.html>

Moreover, the state also legally 'protects' the flag (representing the nation) against defiling and desecration. Laws on 'flag etiquette' indicate that flags are set apart as objects of reflection and treated as 'sacred' objects'. As noted by Firth:

A national flag of a modern state is an officially defined symbol, not simply a symbol of informal public choice or traditional development. As such, its 'sacredness' is an officially imputed quality. Hence 'desecration' becomes a legal matter, to be judged in the light of official pronouncements, either codified or expressed in the common law.<sup>53</sup>

However, in this context, the flag as instrument of control is twofold, as the nationals or citizens themselves also exercise control over the state in their private display of flags.

'Negative' and 'positive' acts towards the national flag are part of the feedback of popular response. The reaction or feedback to the symbol is constituted by two parts: the action of the protesters and, in turn, the reaction of other people to their protest.<sup>54</sup>

The flag as a symbol of dissent can be used as protest against authority, against a single action or as an ideological condemnation, but in such cases "the national symbol is manipulated in order to assert moral value over existing power value."<sup>55</sup> The violation inverts the values of the flag by trying to invoke and incite change.

Thus, national flags may operate in reverse. Since the flag represents certain nations, interests and characteristics, it can also be used as an instrument to protest against these interests. The symbolic significance of the flag is very clear in instances when the flag is maltreated and defiled. Desecration of flags is really a substitute act of resentment against governing elites or against nations. Firth argues: "the symbol is treated as a

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<sup>53</sup> Firth, 1973:365

<sup>54</sup> As Firth points out, this analysis requires further observation and investigation.

<sup>55</sup> Firth, 1973:365

surrogate, on which moral and physical force can be allowed to spend itself with minimal harm.”<sup>56</sup>

The public destruction of national flags is a form of desecration and represents deliberate acts of disrespect. An early example of flags being used in this way include the Jacobite struggle against the English Hanoverian kings, who after the battle of Culloden (1746) put a stop to the Highland resistance. The treatment of the rebel standards captured provide us with interesting information about the associations involved:

They [the rebel standards] were carried by the chief hangman of Edinburgh and by chimneysweeps, with an escort, and laid in the dust, while a proclamation was read explaining why they were to be burnt by the public hangman. Each standard was then laid over the flames, while the senior herald named the Scottish clan that had marched behind it to battle. This was deliberate disrespect, with symbolic modes of contempt: training in the dust; handling by executioners and men associated with black soot; consumption by fire.<sup>57</sup>

The captured Nazi standards in the 1945 Victory Parade in Moscow received similar treatment (see Chapter One).<sup>58</sup> A contemporary example is the flag burnings of the Union Jack in 2004 by Muslim protesters against the Iraqi war in London, which gained considerable attention in the media. Belarus is also an interesting case in the context of protests against authority. Belarus employed a white, red and white tricolour after independence, from 1991 to 1995, but restored a modified version of the red and green flag used during the Soviet era in 1995 (with the national ornament in inverted

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<sup>56</sup> Firth, 1973:356

<sup>57</sup> Firth refers to the study made by John Prebble, *Culloden*. 1967:93,99,190-1. In Firth, 1973:356

<sup>58</sup> Examples outside Europe include the protests against the Vietnam War in the United States when burning of the American flag by Vietnam veterans themselves became a powerful form of protest. In March 2003, on the Jewish holiday of Purim, members of Neturei Karta around the world participated in the symbolic burning of the Israeli flag in protest against the State of Israel. The protest was stopped in London before it could take place. Islam Online, “Members of the Neturei Karta burn the flag in London”, <http://www.islamonline.net/English/Views/2003/08/article07.shtml>

colours and without the hammer and sickle emblem).<sup>59</sup> As the tricolour was outlawed by the authorities it came, however, to be a significant symbol in the protests that followed. This was especially the case on the day of the anniversary of the ‘new’ constitution which had given President Lukashenko and his government extensive powers. One report stated: “Some flags were so large that the authorities had to use heavy-duty equipment to remove them.”<sup>60</sup>

There are naturally variations in judicial interpretation in the laws of the state as regards the protection of national flags, which indicates that the flag as a symbol is not handled by law as an object, but rather, as a *relationship*, the relationship between the object of the flag and the nation.

For the Durkheimian school the world is divided into a ‘sacred’ and a ‘profane’ sphere. However, Durkheim never allowed for the fact that ‘sacred’ symbols may be violated as a form of protest in the ‘profane’ sphere, and this two-domain categorisation has proven to be insufficient. The violations of national symbols have implications for the analysis, and a notion of an intermediate level – the ‘mundane’ sphere – must be added to Durkheim’s categorisation in order to illustrate that the ‘sacredness’ of flags may be ignored in the mundane world.<sup>61</sup> The flag requires less ‘exaggerated’ respect in the ‘mundane’ sphere, in contrast to the profane sphere where the flag and its ‘sacred’ status is protected in order for the flag not to be disrespected. An example of the latter

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<sup>59</sup> FOTW, “White and Red Flag in Belarus”, [http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/by\\_1991.html#tri](http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/by_1991.html#tri)

<sup>60</sup> Newslines, “Lukashenko opponents stage flag protest”, 21 November 1997 [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org)

<sup>61</sup> Firth, 1973; Stanner, 1967:217-40

is that the flag is not allowed to touch the ground when lowered.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, only specially sanctioned individuals are allowed to touch the flag and to fold it into a 'neat bundle' as we saw in the case of the American flag ceremony. However, we find that flags when, for example, used as decoration on clothes or painted on the face of supporters on sporting occasions, are adapted to the mundane sphere where their 'sacred' meaning is ignored. Historically, it is possible to observe how the national flag, as in Britain, has continuously moved from the sacred to the mundane sphere. Before 1939, it was hardly ever displayed by individuals, as it was associated with an official and/or royal context<sup>63</sup>. In contemporary Britain it is also used as decoration, for example on clothing.<sup>64</sup>

Firth makes an important addition to Durkheim, since the notions of flags as 'sacred objects' and foci for sentiment are valid to a limited degree. Moreover, consensus alone is not the basis of society as claimed by Durkheim, who has omitted the fact that disunity is often displayed in the political sphere. Moreover, the parallel between the totem of the clan and the flag of the nation (the flag being the centre of a cult replacing ancient totems) ignores the significance of the concept of power in its extended

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<sup>62</sup> When the American flag is lowered, no part of it should touch the ground or any other object. If so it must be destroyed by burning in a 'dignified' manner. USA Flag Site, "Proper disposal of the American flag", <http://www.usa-flag-site.org/faq/disposal.shtml>

<sup>63</sup> The usage of Union Jack was restricted from the beginning: "It was the view of the King in Council 5th November 1800 that the Flag of Union could be flown on land only from His Majesty's forts and castles, and from His Majesty's ships at sea. It is the national official flag." Public Record Office, Sir Gatty, Garter King of Arms in 1907. [HO 45/10287/109071], FOTW, "United Kingdom: Use and Status of the Flag", <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/gb-use.html>

<sup>64</sup> In countries where the flag is of high consequence it may be seen as a provocation to use flags for decoration. It seems there is less focus in Britain on the national flag as a symbol of protest, compared to e.g. the United States. The presence of the Monarchy in Britain – another highly significant national symbol – may have allowed for an alternative route of demonstrating against the nation. In the United States however, the connection between symbol and society has been made intimate by the authorities

meaning in modern society. Firth has a valid point, although many scholars beforehand have acknowledged the display of social determinism and the simplistic categorisation of traditional societies in Durkheim's writings. Highlighting symbols of dissent is a valuable contribution to the Durkheimian perspective, in which 'sacred' symbols or ceremonies are temporarily introduced into the profane world in order to create cohesion.

The national flag is, in other words, a 'double-edged instrument'; when it is violated physically it is treated as a 'counter-instrument' to what it represents. As a symbol of power and authority, the flag will be the most effective target for expressing dissent. But as society selects its symbols, it may also decide what protests against them it will permit.

Firth's analysis is important on various levels. With the creation of the 'new' flags of Central and Eastern Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in mind, he states, "it is the mark of the power of flag symbols that the process of their creation still continues"<sup>65</sup>. As was demonstrated in Chapter Two, a change in government or ideological regime often leads to a modification of an existing flag or the creation of a new one. Classical examples are the 'modern' flags created after the French and the Russian Revolutions, during the Spanish Civil War, and in the Soviet Union and its Socialist Republics. Firth claims: "The creation of a national flag is so much part of the modern political symbolism of nation-making that a people may even proceed to the recognition of a

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who have introduced very detailed laws of how the flag ought to be treated. In terms of 'sacred' symbols, the American national flag meets that description very closely.



flag *before* they attain nationhood.”<sup>66</sup> New flags may be introduced in the process of mobilising people and in order to justify the creation of the state. So, the use of a distinctive flag may also start *before* ‘statehood’ has been attained, as was the case, for example, in Norway, Iceland, Scotland, the Baltic States, Slovakia and Croatia. In either case, the flag is at the core of nation building, and the nation justifies the creation of the state.

### **3.2 Political Tools or Expressions of Distinctiveness?**

We now turn to the question of the primary function of flags. Are they mainly political tools or are they expressions of identity and distinctiveness? In Breuilly’s<sup>67</sup> rather instrumental approach, national symbolism is a powerful tool through which nationalist regimes seek to mobilise the population in their pursuit of power. Nevertheless, Breuilly acknowledges that the features of the socio-political structure must be conducive to the creation of a sense of national solidarity. Otherwise, the politics of ‘cultural engineering’ will have little effect on the population. As seen previously, political symbolism, apart from flags, refers to anthems, national holidays, rallies, and marches. Objects such as flags are used in national ceremonies and they serve to enhance the national collective experience.<sup>68</sup> Breuilly writes:

Nationalist movements, like all mass movements, make use of symbols and ceremonies. These give nationalist ideas a definite shape and force, both by projecting certain images and by enabling people to come together in ways which seem directly to express the solidarity of the nation. Nationalist symbolism is able to do this in particularly effective ways because it has a quality of self-reference which is largely missing from socialist or religious ideology. Nationalists celebrate themselves rather than some transcendent reality, whether this be

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<sup>65</sup> Firth, 1973: 347

<sup>66</sup> Firth, 1973: 348 Emphasis added

<sup>67</sup> Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*. 1993

<sup>68</sup> Breuilly, 1993:277-278

located in another world or in a future society, although the celebration also involves a concern with transformation of present reality.<sup>69</sup>

National imagery is effective precisely because of its self-referential quality, as opposed to religious symbolism worshipping a deity. This is a difference not highlighted by Durkheim. The central message conveyed through flags, anthems and ceremonials is that of an embattled people. Updating Durkheim, Breuilly points to the self-referential quality of national symbolism and the effectiveness of national imagery: people are actually induced to worship themselves as nationals and citizens. History provides people with a feeling of being distinct – and the symbolic history provides the nation with an intense summary of that feeling of distinctiveness. Moreover, national memories manifested in symbolic form are potent in that they connect the heroes of the past to the people of the present with the aim of encouraging and demanding a return to the Golden Age.<sup>70</sup>

The developments during the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) demonstrate how new leaders want to reconnect to ‘old’ heroes. At the beginning of the Civil War, the rebels found themselves fighting under several flags. Some rebels used the republican tricolour (red, yellow and purple) which had been employed since 1931 with the formation of the Second Spanish Republic<sup>71</sup>; others used different versions of the older royal bicolour (red and yellow) flag. The many political forces on both sides – Falange,

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<sup>69</sup> Breuilly, 1993:64

<sup>70</sup> Breuilly, 1993:64-68

<sup>71</sup> The republican tricolour included a version of the national coat of arms. However, the crown, above the arms, and the Bourbon escutcheon, in the middle, had been removed. The colour purple was added as a ‘typical’ republican colour and as a symbol of struggle against feudal institutions, church privileges and foreign monarchs. Smith, “Spain, Medieval Heraldry in Modern Form”. 1975: 125 FOTW, “Spain: Historical flags 1936-38. Flags of the Rebel or National Forces”.  
<http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/es1936.html>

Requeté, the communists, the anarchists, the Basque units – also had their own colours and flags. General Franco intervened in this case in August 1936, because it proved hazardous not to be in possession of a symbol of identification and the rebellious forces needed to be ‘united’ under one banner that differentiated them from the republicans. Thus, Franco announced that the pre-republican bicolour flag of red and yellow was to be restored as the flag of Spain. In terms of recalling the ‘Golden Age’, Franco re-introduced the previous crowned coat of arms to the red and yellow flag two years later, with the justification that the era of ‘Spanish Greatness’ and the days of Isabella and Ferdinand should not be forgotten. Franco also added the black eagle of St. John and the yoke and arrow – a symbol for his Falange supporters – under the slogan ‘Una, grande, libre’ (One, great, free).<sup>72</sup>

In this connection, we may recall Hobsbawm’s theoretical tool of ‘invented tradition’<sup>73</sup>, mentioned in Chapter One; this also refers to the attempts of national elites to construct

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<sup>72</sup> Smith, “Spain, Medieval Heraldry in Modern Form”, 1975: 124-29; FOTW, “Spain: Historical flags 1938-45”, <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/es1938.html>; FOTW, “Spain, Historical Flags, 1945-77”, <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/es1945.html>; FOTW, “Spain, Historical Flags 1931-39”, <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/es1931.html>

<sup>73</sup> The mass production of public monuments (‘statuomania’), from 1870 to 1914, was typical of the Third Republic of France and the Second German Empire, during their respective processes of nation-formation. From the late 1860s onwards, three major innovations are recognized in France: (1) development of primary education as a secular equivalent of the education handled by the church; (2) creation of public ceremonies (e.g. Bastille Day in 1880), and (3) mass production of public monuments. (Public ceremonies and monuments will be discussed in chapter five). Such manifestations connected with the founding of the new régime in France were also characteristic of the Second German Empire. The ‘new’ interpretation of German history was primarily visible in the forms of new monuments, new architecture, sculptures and buildings. However, it lacked a ‘historical legitimacy’ for the unification and for the national aspirations of the people; the process of nation-formation in Germany was, rather, based on a principle of exclusion and perceived threats, and on the concept of cultural, political and military supremacy, founded to a large extent on ethnocentrism. Hobsbawm argues that the Second Empire had to rely on internal and external enemies and on the idea of supremacy for its self-definition. Hobsbawm offers an insightful account of France and Germany insofar as national symbolism and ritualisation are concerned. Unfortunately, his empirical examples tend only to skim the surface of nationhood, and could have been even more illuminating if a thorough investigation of a particular case had been undertaken.

a living past and a connection to mythical periods and heroes. From this point of view, national identities are deliberately created through formalised ritual and symbolic complexes.<sup>74</sup> Hobsbawm highlights many significant points. According to him, ancient material is used in the process of constructing emotionally charged signs, such as the national flag, anthem and emblem for the members of a society.

A good example of such 'invented traditions' is the 'heraldic' flag. If we recall the evidence presented in Table Four in Chapter Two, a trend becomes clear. The 'heraldic' flags that claim continuity with an often distant past on the grounds of medieval coats of arms or heraldic colours are for the most part 'new flags', such as those of Austria, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Wales, Croatia, Slovenia, Albania, Ukraine, Moldova, and Macedonia (exceptions are the flags of Spain and Portugal).

The flag situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1998 is another illuminating case of how national symbols can be a pure creation. The flag of Bosnia-Herzegovina is the only flag in contemporary Europe that has been imposed from the outside, by the United Nations. The background was that competing flags were used by the Croats, Serbs and Muslims, after the flag that had been adopted in 1992 (white with a shield of fleurs-de-lis<sup>75</sup>) had become associated with the Bosnian Muslims, and the symbolic expressions

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Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914". In *The Invention of Tradition*, 1992: 263-307

<sup>74</sup> The overall framework for 'invented traditions' is, according to Hobsbawm, the state, as a tool in the hand of formal rulers and dominant groups. The widespread process of electoral democracy, which institutionalised mass participation, also led to the discovery of the potency of 'irrational' elements. Controlling national symbolism and traditions therefore became a state goal, in order to maintain social order.

<sup>75</sup> The original flag of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was a blue, white and red tricolour with a red star (1945-92). The White Flag with a shield of fleurs-de-lis adopted in Bosnia in

became a battlefield in itself. The new flag was met with protests.<sup>76</sup> As noted by Schöpflin, symbols and myths invariably enhance division in ethnically divided societies, unless uniting myths and symbols can be found.<sup>77</sup>

In terms of invented practices, the ‘symbolic measures’ taken by the European Union in order to create a sense of European-ness may also be mentioned. These include a European flag, Europe Day<sup>78</sup> and a European Anthem<sup>79</sup>. The European Flag – a circle of twelve gold stars on a blue background – was adopted in 1985. The circle of stars was selected as a symbol of ‘perfection, completeness and unity’.<sup>80</sup> As noted by Shore<sup>81</sup>, the peoples of Europeans were seen as lacking consciousness of their European heritage so the measures undertaken by the European Union were intended to remedy this. Although the European flag may not at present fulfil the same functions as a national flag, its continuing use may in time produce the same effects.

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1992 is claimed to originate from the coat of arms of the Kotromanic family, who ruled Bosnia in the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries. “Heraldry and the Origin of the Bosnian Fleur-de-lis”, FOTW, <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/ba-1992.html>

<sup>76</sup> The News Agency of the Republika Srpska reported that the Mayor of Zvornik refused to accept the new flag “In the name of the thousand mothers of killed Serbian veterans and the thousand war disabled persons.” SNRA (News Agency of the Republika Srpska), “Flagging Progress: Bosnia-Herzegovina Flag Change 1998”, FOTW, <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/ba-fc98.html>

<sup>77</sup> Schöpflin, *Nations, Identity, Power*. 2000:85; Schöpflin, “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths”. 1997: 19-35.

<sup>78</sup> Europe Day is celebrated on 9 May. This date was chosen in honour of the ‘Schuman Declaration’, which called for the creation of an organised Europe, in order for peaceful relations to be maintained. “Europe Day, 9<sup>th</sup> May”, Gateway to the European Union, [http://europa.eu.int/abc/symbols/9-may/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/abc/symbols/9-may/index_en.htm)

<sup>79</sup> Beethoven’s *Ode to Joy* was adopted in 1972, and is meant to express the European Union’s ideals for peace and solidarity. “The European Anthem”, Gateway to the European Union, [http://europa.eu.int/abc/symbols/anthem/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/abc/symbols/anthem/index_en.htm)

<sup>80</sup> There were many reasons for choosing the twelve stars: “Twelve was a symbol of perfection and plenitude, associated equally with the apostles, the sons of Jacob, the tables of the Roman legislator, the labours of Hercules, the hours of the day, the months of the year, or the signs of the Zodiac. Lastly, the circular layout denoted union.” Quotation in Shore, *Building Europe: The Cultural politics of European Integration*, 2000: 47; See also EC Bulletin, Supplement No. 2, 1988 ; “The European Flag”, Gateway to the European Union, [http://europa.eu.int/abc/symbols/emblem/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/abc/symbols/emblem/index_en.htm)

<sup>81</sup> Shore, 2000:47

Generally speaking, in order to be 'effective' national symbols must have acquired associations of a distinctive community and collective memory. Ultimately, symbols and ceremonies must have a resonance with people if they are to survive. With regard to Europe, Jean Monnet once allegedly remarked that "if we were to do it all again we would start with culture"<sup>82</sup>.

Hobsbawm, as well as Breuilly, departs from a perspective where nationalism is the force behind the construction of national identities. Thus, national symbols are studied as instruments of manipulation. The formation of national identities and the natural growth of symbolic expressions as a result of non-manipulative cultural connections are at times lost within this perspective. Moreover, the survey of European national flags, presented in the previous chapter, ought to constitute enough evidence for the fact that the development of the main national symbol has been a long process and cannot be located exclusively in a specific period of 'mass-producing inventions'. Some countries embarked on this process as early as the Middle Ages. Furthermore, considering the context in which the nation flags are introduced (wars, conflicts, revolutions, struggles for independence, constitutions), their usage cannot simply be dismissed as the result of national elites trying to imbue populations with propaganda or as constructed out of a purely fabricated history. The flags are, on the contrary, and for the most part, symbols that have genuinely come to express nationhood. It is important to remember that many lives have been lost and sacrificed throughout history in the name of the nation and under its banner.

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<sup>82</sup> Shore 1993: 785

Symbols, memories, values, myths and traditions, as basic elements of nationhood, are at the core of the work of Anthony D. Smith.<sup>83</sup> According to Smith, the significance of the national ‘language of symbolism’ expressed through national symbols, ceremonies and customs is of paramount importance in understanding the fundamental mechanisms in forming national consciousness as well as in maintaining a national identity. He states:

Symbols such as flags, emblems, anthems, costume, special foods, and sacred objects, give expression of our sense of difference and distinctiveness of the community [...] myths of origins, liberation, the golden age, and chosenness link the sacred past to a sense of collective destiny. Each of these elements articulated a vital dimension of the culture-community.<sup>84</sup>

Smith stresses the importance of continuity through memories of past sacrifices, heroism, victories, defeats and golden ages – these give us a sense of belonging to a lineage of generations. The continuity with the past, as expressed through symbols such as the flag, provides the present with a sense of rootedness and stability. Needless to say, stability does not indicate that identities are constant – on the contrary they are subject to change in an ever-changing world. Thus, symbols are significant in terms of reminders of continuity.

The use of history, as a ‘container’ of images (artefacts and customs) and of a tradition of events (through heroes, landscapes and values), determines the durability of ethnic groups.<sup>85</sup> This ‘myth-symbol complex’<sup>86</sup> is the actual essence of intrinsic ethnicity in a particular ‘ethnie’ and constitutes the core of nations-to-be. The complex of myths and

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<sup>83</sup> Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*. 2003; *Nationalism and Modernism*, 1998; *Nations and Nationalism in A Global Era*. 1995; *National Identity*. 1991; *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. 1986 ; “The Myth of the ‘Modern Nation’ and the Myths of Nations”. 1988: 1-26

<sup>84</sup> Smith, “The formation of National Identity”. 1995:132

symbols, symbolic boundaries or ‘border guards’ therefore constitute the starting-point for the intelligentsia and societal institutions in their efforts to motivate the community to take part in the process of nation-building.

With the ethno-symbolist perspective in mind, we can better understand the appearance of the ‘old’ European flags (see Chapter Two). The first Cross flags (Denmark, Sweden, England, Scotland, and Switzerland) are ‘old’ in that they have survived from the medieval into the modern period. Their early existence indicates that some forms of pre-modern loyalty existed, and their development into national flags tells us that these loyalties were transformed into national ones. These flags cannot, due to their early existence, be categorised as ‘inventions’ which may be a term appropriate for the age of mass-politics, but is hardly applicable to the development of traditions and symbols in earlier periods. Hobsbawm’s approach has rightly been called ‘presentism’.<sup>87</sup> This term implies that the past is important in the present mainly in the process whereby elites invent traditions in order to create continuity with the past, legitimise power and institutions, symbolise social cohesion and secure mass-obedience. Misztal highlights the notion that ‘invented’ traditions suggests that there are also ‘real’ and older traditions. In line with the evidence presented in the tables on ‘old’ and ‘modern’ flags in Chapter Two, Misztal argues that the ‘presentist’ approach fails to acknowledge that the past endures in the present through social, cultural and political processes that keep it alive.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Smith, 1991:14; Smith, “Art and Nationalism in Europe”, 1993: 64-80

<sup>86</sup> Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*. 1982

<sup>87</sup> Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*. 2003: 56-61

<sup>88</sup> Misztal, 2003: 60



It is not only the ‘old’ flags that need consideration in this context. The Norwegian cross flag, for example, was recognised after a seventy-seven year long struggle for the right to fly a distinctive flag. The flag was established as late as 1905 after the break-up of the Union with Sweden, and in the period of ‘mass-produced’ inventions. But the Norwegians had already used it as an expression of their awareness of constituting a group distinct from the Swedes as early as 1814.

If the appearance of national flags, as the main national symbol, is to be explained, they need to be studied with their past in mind and the analyses offered by the ethno-symbolist perspective and the ‘presentist’ approach need to be combined. National flags appear along a continuum of ‘old’, ‘modern’ to ‘new’, which means that the processes of ‘creating’ and ‘re-constructing’, as well as ‘inventing’, need to be acknowledged. Moreover, the usage of national flags is not exclusively one or the other. Flags may be both effective political tools and at the same time expressions of distinctiveness. It is precisely because national flags express distinctiveness and nationhood that they can be used as political tools.

### **3.4 National Narratives: Types and Designs**

National flags constitute ‘brief narratives’ and can be classified in accordance to symbolic groups or flag-families. Categorized in this way national expression provides a further understanding of national self-perception and claims to historically designated territories. In the previous chapter three main symbolic regimes were identified: ‘old’, ‘modern’ and ‘new’ flags. Moreover, three main types of flags, linked by common

traditions, could be identified in the European context: Cross Flags (type 1), Tricolours (type 2), and Heraldic Flags displaying mainly heraldic devices (type 3). This third group is mainly composed of flags with heraldic colours or with a shield or a coat of arms.<sup>89</sup>

The symbolic origin for the ‘old’ cross flags was religious and as regards ‘age’ they stand in contrast to the newer ‘heraldic flags’, which through the use of ‘old’ symbolism of heraldic colours and devices assert the right of peoples to exist as independent nations. Generally speaking, it would be no exaggeration to state that symbolic ‘truth’ has taken precedence over historical reality. Many examples have been provided in the tables on ‘old’, ‘modern’ and ‘new’ flags that demonstrate that flags appear, with the community they represent, along a continuum of symbolic reconstruction and construction, something further examined in Chapter Six. An overview of the appearance of symbolic regimes and the three different flag types associated with these can be seen in the table below:

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<sup>89</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Two, cross flags as well as tricolours may have been influenced by heraldic colours and devices. However, both these flag types appear in a different context and were chosen with religious or political symbolism in mind. In heraldic flags, the origin of the colours or the heraldic device itself, constitute the central element of the flag.

### 3.4.1 Symbolic Regimes and Flag Types

**Table 3-1: Symbolic Regimes and Typology of National Flags**<sup>90</sup>

	<b>TYPE 1 CROSS FLAGS</b>	<b>TYPE 2 TRICOLOURS</b>	<b>TYPE 3 HERALDIC FLAGS</b>
<b>OLD FLAGS</b>	Denmark Sweden England Scotland Northern Ireland Switzerland	The Netherlands Russia	Spain
<b>MODERN FLAGS</b>	Greece Finland Norway	France Belgium Italy Germany Hungary Romania Bulgaria	Portugal
<b>NEW FLAGS</b>	Iceland	Ireland Lithuania Estonia	Austria Poland Latvia Czech Republic Slovakia Wales Croatia Slovenia Moldova Albania Ukraine Belarus FYROM (Macedonia)

<sup>90</sup> The flags of Moldova, Albania, Ukraine, Belarus and FYROM were not listed in the tables in Chapter Two, but have been included in the table above as they support the overall conclusion. The flag of the Republic of Moldova (tricolour with coat of arms) was adopted in 1990 prior to independence in 1991. It displays a combination of the old coat of arms of Romania (the eagle is claimed to date to Byzantium) and a modern shield of the bison's head (representing the old province of Bessarabia). Albania's flag (black double-headed eagle on red field) was adopted in 1992. The black double-headed eagle was chosen by Skanderbeg who led the Albanians in the fight against the Ottomans in the 1440s. Ukraine's flag (yellow and blue) was adopted in 1992 and claims to reproduce the colours of the coat of arms of medieval 'Ukrainian' cities. Belarus' flag is red and green with a national ornament (a white stripe along the mast with a red ornament). Red is claimed to have appeared on medieval 'Belarussian' banners in their fights against the crusaders. The flag of FYROM (a golden sun on red) based on the coat of arms was adopted in 1995, after a dispute with Greece in 1992 when Greece claimed 'the sun of Verghina', found on the sarcophagus believed to belong to Philip II, King of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great) who ruled 'Macedonia' 359-336 BC. For sources on these flags see Appendix 1.

## Cross Flags (Type 1)

The oldest flags of Europe are those which display the Christian Cross. Many of them have their origin during the Crusades and the military campaigns undertaken in the name of Christianity. Others have been selected later in order to symbolise the role of Christianity in the formation of the modern nation as in the case of the Greek flag in its relation to the Hellenic Nation: a combination of a cross and 'revolutionary' stripes. Another old flag, in terms of its parts, is the Union Jack, a combination of the old crosses of St George, St Andrew and St. Patrick. The Scandinavian cross (as seen in its original form in the flags of Denmark, Sweden and Finland) has been influenced by the Danish Flag, which is the oldest national flag: it has survived from the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries, whereas the Swedish flag dates from the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The flags of Finland, Norway, and Iceland are new in comparison to these two Cross flags, but have been modelled on the Danish Cross in order to express Scandinavian loyalties. The Danish Cross, in turn, and the well-known old Swiss cross flag dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century and originating in Schwyz, are based on the imperial war flag of the Holy Roman Empire (white cross on red).

The myths associated with some of the early cross flags give us valuable information about the first successful prototypes and how they became powerful symbols for their communities to rally around. The legends of 'chosen-ness' (chosen by God) surrounding many flags (a legend above all associated with the Danish flag falling from heaven, producing victory for the Danish over the Estonian pagans) have been significant in establishing the successful symbolic regime of the Cross. Like the Swiss

Cross, the Danish cross almost certainly had its roots in the Holy Roman Empire where the imperial flag was of the same design with a red field, symbolising war and conflict, and a white cross pointing to the just and holy cause of the battle. No doubt such a justification came in handy during the many wars, slaughter and plunder that characterised the crusades.

A possible explanation of the retention of the Cross Flags is that they were tied to Protestant states dissenting from Papacy and Roman Catholicism, and became in effect 'symbols of defiance'. The Protestant Church developed along national lines in England, Denmark and Sweden as a dissenting religion tied to the Monarchy. The Monarch became the head of the national church, and the growth of the state and nation coincided in these countries. Thus, it is possible that Protestantism came to define these states and early nations, and that their Cross flags, as a result, expressed an identity framed in terms of 'we are Protestant'. Moreover, in comparison to Protestantism, Catholicism is trans-national, which could explain why the many medieval cross-flags used by the Catholic states did not survive, some of which also had to overcome bitter religious divisions. These Protestant countries are still monarchies and a complete revolution<sup>91</sup> has not taken place, which was the main incentive for the tricolours to be introduced.

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<sup>91</sup> The Civil War in 1642-45 and the Commonwealth were succeeded by the Restoration of 1660 in Britain.

## Tricolour Flags (Type 2)

With the exception of the Dutch tricolour, all of the old flags that survived into modern times are cross flags. The Dutch flag of independence is therefore unique as it made a clear break with earlier religious symbolism, associated with the Dutch revolt for religious and political freedom. The tricolour of the Netherlands (red, white and blue), associated with the concepts of liberty and of a republican form of government, which were later reinforced by the French adoption of the same colours in a vertical version, was the source that other tricolour flags selected to express adherence to the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. Among these we have – apart from France - the vertical tricolours of Russia, Italy, Romania, Ireland, Slovenia, and the horizontal tricolours of Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Estonia, Slovakia and Belgium (square). As in the case of the cross flag, a myth of heroism also surrounded the tricolour. The French flag, with its adherence to liberty, freedom and brotherhood, was also used as a promise of a new more ‘democratic’ era and, at times, as justification for actions that turned out to be far from these ideals.

## Heraldic Flags (Type 3)

The introduction of heraldry and the adoption of coats of arms by European royalty in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries influenced many modern national flags of Europe. Some heraldic flags are bi-coloured with specific reference to livery colours of the coat of arms (Austria and Poland) or may display heraldic devices on the flags (Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Slovakia and Slovenia).<sup>92</sup> The Croatian, Slovak and Slovenian flags –

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<sup>92</sup> Other flags, such as the Ukrainian and the Albanian flags also belong to Type 3 in that they display heraldic colours (Ukraine) or a heraldic device (Albania).

tricolours with coat of arms – symbolise in colours and composition the affiliation with Russia. It is, however, the Croatian, Slovak and Slovenian heraldic devices superimposed on the tricolours, which make these flags distinctly ‘national’. For example, the flag of Croatia demonstrates the somewhat contradictory path to nationhood: its political origin related to the tricolour and its roots as a kingdom associated with the coat of arms and the crown of shields above it.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.4.2 Composition & Similarities

The characteristics of the flag are part of a system of communication through which the nation expresses itself to others. From an analytical point of view, it is also interesting to investigate the general characteristics of the European national flags and they ways in which they are similar.<sup>94</sup>

All flags have some general characteristics in common. Nationals must be made aware of the unit in which they live. The colours of the flag are of practical use as they turn

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<sup>93</sup> As a subgroup of type 3, we find that some of the recent 20<sup>th</sup> century flags display, instead of heraldic designs (although a ‘heraldic’ origin is claimed), specific politically charged symbols: a triangle (used to signify a union) – the Czech Republic; a national ornament – Belarus; a sun – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. All these flags claim heraldic influences. Whether a heraldic device or a political symbol is displayed, these flags have one thing in common: a specific device is chosen to further distinguish the nation from others.

<sup>94</sup> The empirical study of national flags conducted by Weitman offers many insights, at times from a vexillologist’s point of view, rather than from a sociologist’s perspective. The specific information that has been collected about national flags relates to (1) proportions (length and width); (2) colours (outstanding colours of each flag); (3) field design (horizontal, plain field); (4) ‘device’ type, location as well as distinguishable elements (representation of an object on the flag e.g. coat of arms and its entities). Weitman’s study, although somewhat outdated, encompasses the national flags of the 137 sovereign territorial ‘nation-states’ identified in 1970. Case studies, however, are not provided since the method of the study is content analysis. ‘Sovereign territorial nation-states’ are those which “govern themselves internally and also take charge of their external affairs” (Weitman, 1973:331), the latter referring in particular to the areas of military defence and diplomatic relations. This seems to be a definition of the ‘state’ rather than of the ‘nation’, and may have excluded many nations and consequently flags at the beginning of the nation-building process. Moreover, Weitman does not specify instances where the national and the state flag differ, although this would have been very interesting and could have thrown

the flag into a distinct symbol, which commands the attention of the nationals. It is also essential that the nationals get a feeling of the nation as an organic being and not as an artificial construct. Therefore, the flag is designed to fly in the wind, providing a sense of vitality:

Nation-states have chosen to represent themselves not only via their colours but via a FREELY FLYING version of their colours [...] there is something fascinating in the seemingly endless and unassisted movement of a flag in the wind, much as there is something fascinating in the perpetual motion of flames and of ocean waves.<sup>95</sup>

What exactly is so fascinating? According to Weitman<sup>96</sup>, it is the connotation of the flag being ‘alive’ and the message communicated ‘live rather than inert’. The nation-state is portrayed as an entity moved by its own will and power. In Durkheimian terminology, a national flag is a reality ‘sui generis’. Indeed, the symbol sui generis of the nation is additionally flown above us, forcing us to look up. This is another way of enforcing its supremacy, which is further enhanced by pledges of allegiance, and salutes to the flag.

Secondly, and as regards the material, all flags are made of ‘bunting’ – a special type of cloth that is more or less ‘indestructible’ and durable over the passing of years. Weitman argues that associations can be made to the everlastingness and endurance of the nation. This may be going too far. The general idea may be “to foster the notion that the nation-state itself, like its flag, is indestructible and immortal”<sup>97</sup>. Highly significant, however, is the general prohibition to bury the flag with the dead. Again, the notion of

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some light on the concepts involved, the nation and the state, both neglected in the analysis. Weitman, “National Flags: A Sociological overview”, 1973: 328-369.

<sup>95</sup> Weitman, 1977: 336

<sup>96</sup> Weitman, 1973: 328-369.

<sup>97</sup> Weitman, 1970: 337



‘immortality’ relates, more specifically, to the ‘sacredness’ of national flags expressed by the many regulations surrounding their usage by codes of ‘flag etiquette’. As has been discussed previously, the pure notion of ‘flag desecration’ implies that there is at least an official view of the flag as a sacred object – and this is the image that is communicated about the nation.

Thirdly, national flags are distinguishable by their particular characteristics, and the main function of each individual national flag is to place and identify the nation as a nation alongside other nations in the international arena. It is through the specific design that the uniqueness of the flag is communicated. But the distinctiveness of a nation is not maximised through the design of the flag if we take the vast similarities between flag designs into account. So although the flags are distinct per se, their conformity and standardisation, as regards colours and design, express an overriding wish to communicate the independence or sovereignty of the nation among other similar sovereign nation-states. Hence, it is important to be perceived as ‘one of them’. A notion of equality as well as normality is hereby negotiated and communicated.

An interesting situation arose in 1992 when the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was forced to alter its flag (red with a sixteen pointed sun) after the dispute with Greece which claimed that ‘the sun of Vergina’ was a Greek symbol. This symbol was found on the sarcophagus believed to belong to Philip II (father of Alexander the Great). As expressed from a Greek point of view:

The Vergina Sun, the emblem of Philip's dynasty, symbolizes the birth of our nation. It was the first time (4th century BC) that the Greek mainland (city-states and kingdoms) with the same language, culture, and religion were united against the enemies of Asia in one league.

At the same time the fractured Greek world grew conscious of its unity. And, in this sense, we have never been apart since then. The "Sun" was excavated in Greece in 1978, and it is sacred to us.<sup>98</sup>

Although the claims above have been highly disputed, the FYROM adopted a new red flag with an *eight* pointed sun in 1995.<sup>99</sup>

Fourthly, the nation can also express affiliation with other nations, by choosing the same colours and similar designs that simultaneously communicate dissociation from others.<sup>100</sup> The idea of 'paying respect to the colours' is an illuminating phrase in this context. National flags express complex notions of nationhood as well as national ideals and interests, communicated through colour-combinations and designs asserting the moral validity of the national community. Affiliation is expressed through the designs of the Scandinavian Cross-flags, or with the adoption of the many Tricolour Flags in Central and Eastern Europe. Needless to say, red, white and blue is a colour-combination used by many countries. Today they are the Pan-Slavic colours but also

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<sup>98</sup> FOTW, "The Controversy with Greece; the Greek point of view", <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/mk-1992.html#gre>

<sup>99</sup> It is also interesting that two years later, the FYROM flag law of 1997, restricted the use of 'foreign' flags on public buildings, which limited, in effect, the use of Albanian flags in Macedonia. "Macedonia: The 1997 Flag law", FOTW, <http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/mk.html>

<sup>100</sup> The flags of the Arabic nation-states display combinations of red, black, white and green in the Near East vs. the flag of Israel (white and blue). Weitman looks at various reasons for affiliation. The explanations include (1) geocultural proximity = affiliation = common flag characteristics (2) the two 'super-clusters' of a) Europe, the Americas, Asia and Australia, on the one hand, and those of b) Africa and the Near East on the other. The principal difference between these clusters, according to Weitman is the differential frequency of blue and green. There are of course various other reasons to explore, as Weitman admits: membership in multinational military alliances (e.g. NATO or the Warsaw Pact) or in political –ideological blocs, and the relationship to ex-colonial powers. (The affiliation with France on the part of many of its former ex-colonies used to be expressed by the vertical tricolour, whereas affiliation with the former USSR used to be expressed by usage of distinct emblems). Weitman claims further that identification with the UK or the U.S tends to be expressed by the red-white-blue colour combinations. This explanation does not allow for the development of national flags and the fact that red-white-blue is the most popular colour combination also in Central and Eastern Europe.

the colours of the Dutch and French Tricolours that have inspired many nations in their choice of colours.

Finally, by the particular colours displayed on the flag, the nation communicates the attributes, aspirations and ideals it wishes to be known as its own. An immediate example of how colours are of moral significance in contemporary Europe is the flag of the Republic of Ireland with its green, white and orange: Green for Catholics, ‘orange’ for Protestants, and ‘white’ for the wish for peace between them<sup>101</sup>.

### 3.4.3 Colours and Differences

From an analytical point of view, it is also interesting to explore the main trends as regards colours. The significance of the two most popular colours (red and white) is in particular relevant in the context of Europe. The high proportion of flags displaying ‘red’ – to symbolise bloodshed in battle, military valour, courage, readiness to sacrifice, revolution, struggle for independence and wars – is significant. The saying ‘you earn your flag in blood’ springs to mind. Among ancient types of symbolism, blood-related symbolisms have retained their hold over the contemporary world. Dillistone<sup>102</sup> confirms that symbolism associated with blood and sacrifice has continued to be powerful in the context of religion and culture. The message this sends is: the nation would not hesitate to defend itself if provoked.<sup>103</sup> Among the Europe flags investigated

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<sup>101</sup> Smith, 1975: 231

<sup>102</sup> Dillistone, *The Power of Symbols in Religion and Culture*. 1986: 67-75

<sup>103</sup> Weitman found that nearly 8 out of 10 flags (i.e. 112/137 flags) used ‘red’, which is the most frequently utilized colour in national flags. With regard to emblems depicted on national flags the message is the same. Among the emblems that appear on national flags (50/137) almost 80 per cent also communicate the motif of aggressive self-defence if necessary. As for the material artefacts or other

in Chapter Two, 82 per cent (27 out of 33) display 'red' on their flags. It is only the flags of Sweden, Ireland, Scotland, Finland, Greece and Estonia that do not.

The kind of 'sacrificial' symbolism described above points to the distinct features in which many nations have originated, such as the Netherlands, France, Germany and Norway. The second most frequently used colour, 'white', conveys the opposite impression of peacefulness. 'White' appears in 75 per cent of all the European national flags (25 out of 33). The most frequent meanings nations officially attribute to 'white' are purity and peace, but it also stands for justice, truth, unity, prosperity or even the national landscape in terms of, for example, 'snowy peaks' (Slovenia). Hence 'red' is used to exhort the nationals to be ready to meet the enemy, and to make sacrifices if needed, whereas 'white' assures the international community (as well as its own members) of the nation's devotion to peace. The use of 'white' may thus be interpreted to refer to the sacrifices which may be necessary when defending the nation from the aggressive ambitions of 'other' nations. Notably, many nations display both 'red' and 'white' on their flags, and as has been noted: "It is as though, having rattled their sabers [sic] to show how much violence they are capable of unleashing, nations now hasten to let it be known that they really are, by nature, peaceful, friendly, oozing with good will."<sup>104</sup>

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objects found on these emblems many are symbols of warfare. Out of the 24 animals that are portrayed as many as 19 are dangerous and powerful, basically the kind one would refrain from provoking. See Weitman, 1973:351

<sup>104</sup> Weitman. 1973: 353

In a context of national symbolism, however, it is essential to point to the significance of the ritualised environment associated with it.<sup>105</sup> In other words, national flags do provide data about the properties of the nation-state, which is continuously engaged in active self-advertising, using its national image to keep the appearance of presence, vitality, immortality, sacrosanctness, uniqueness, equality, connectedness, indomitability, rectitude, nobility and wealth.

### **3.5 Expressions of Nationhood: Concluding Remarks**

There are many forms of potent national imagery, communicated through national capitals, monuments, squares, statues, anthems, tombs and national ‘sanctuaries’, such as the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Valley of the Fallen. These are all able to create emotions of patriotism, yet the national flag has become the outstanding national symbol, since it manages to transmit loud-and-clear messages to the members of the nation.

A variety of meanings, associations and functions of national flags as the predominant form of national symbolism have been discussed in this chapter. The flag is, first of all, an intense history of the nation, or a short cut to the nation-building process, and as such it establishes a link to the past. After the emergence of the modern nation, flags started to identify the presence, loyalty, glory, beliefs, aspirations, and status of the

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<sup>105</sup> National flags and national ceremonies must be considered together as it is in ceremonies that flags become ‘active’ symbols. Weitman (1973) neglects to do so, and focuses on the officially proclaimed significance of the designs and colours of the national flags without identifying the process by which national flags are created and adopted. However, as expressed by Weitman, this kind of information is readily available only in a few instances.

socio-political community. On a general level, the nation, through its flag, communicates a message about the nation's authority and permanence, which extends to the nation claiming a 'rightfully' inherited land and including its members as part of a historic community. The flag may also convey notions of loyalty and sacrifice. These messages tie together generations of the national community. The two-edged function of the flag in terms of being simultaneously a medium of integration and of division also needs to be highlighted. Whereas a notion of inclusion is communicated to the members, a message of exclusion is simultaneously communicated to non-members.

The primary function of flags is that they can reinforce identity and unity. This, together with their status as 'sacred' objects which are protected by law against violations, turn them into powerful political tools. In consequence, flags can also provide an instrument of political protest and therefore a political tool for the people. Flags are burned, defaced, corrupted, hung upside down or extra symbols are added to them, in order to insult and protest against (national) authority. An insult to the flag has transcendent meaning as an insult to the nation. The flag used as a counter-instrument makes it a double-edged political tool.

It is the self-referential quality of national symbols that makes them so powerful, as opposed to other forms of symbolism. The ritual contexts in which flags are displayed are experiences in symbolic form and often has a 'religious' structure. This means that the flag gains a status of 'sacredness' when elevated into a 'sacred' object of worship. Nationals are thus able to draw strength from the flag, which serves as an

externalisation of their fears and hopes, and can inspire love of the country and respect for traditions. In this way, the national flag possesses a quality of special reserve as it represents society in its broadest form – its past, present and future - and communicates a message of belonging, in reference to which it has the capacity to provoke involvement.

The ritual contexts in which flags appear provide them with an ‘active’ role that adds to their efficiency. In the context of verbal, graphic, concrete and active symbolism, the flag constitutes a potent symbol as it combines all these four aspects of symbolism, which we have seen in the examples provided in this chapter. National ceremonies in which flags are used are especially effective as they involve motion and participation. By actively contributing to these rituals the members of the community are continuously re-creating their associations with their homeland.

In Nazi Germany an overt and brutal form of the nationalisation of the masses took place through official ceremonies. But many other subtler forms of active nationalisation are today to be found in national practices, for instance, during national holidays, elections and sports tournaments. A newly invented custom of painting the flag on ones face, or displaying the national emblem on ones chest in support of a national team is an example of symbol and ritual merging. This is also an immediate way of illustrating national loyalty, and a way of emphasising the difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

In the last few centuries the usage and design of flags have been standardised and the manufacturing of flags has been commercialised, as their usage today encompasses the spheres of art, advertising, literature, architecture and entertainment. The proliferation of flags in all kinds of social areas – sporting events<sup>106</sup>, private organisations, cities, political units, businesses, labour unions – illustrates the extent of their usage. The flexibility of flags proves that they can be adapted to new circumstances. In consequence, the history of flags suggests that the intimacy between them and socio-political life makes it unlikely that they will disappear. The national flag remains a compact and manageable symbol of expressing nationhood.

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<sup>106</sup> Another illustration of the importance of the flag in the process in which communities sanctify themselves is the flag-related practice introduced by non-national organisations, for example during the Olympic Games. The First Olympic flag is still presented in the opening ceremony when the Olympic flame is lit. In the opening Olympic ceremony national flags represent the participating nations and their athletes, and the honour of carrying the flag is usually given to a ‘deserving’ athlete. At the closing ceremony, the ‘original’ Olympic flag (from the 1920s) is brought out again. In Athens in 2004 it was carried into the stadium followed by the parade of participants, and handed over during pomp and circumstance from the Mayor of Athens to the Mayor of Beijing where the next games will take place in 2008. The ‘handover’ ceremony, in the Olympic context, is similar to the presentation of the colours by the troops to the head of state, for example on Bastille Day in France (See Chapter Four).



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **NATIONAL CEREMONIES: THE EUROPEAN NATIONAL DAYS AND CASE STUDIES**

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We now move from national symbols to the investigation of national ceremonies, in which symbols, naturally, play a crucial role. The focus of this chapter is the national day as the symbolic birthday of the nation, and as the most important manifestation of the official notion of the nation expressed through myths, rituals, symbols and traditions. The historic social and cultural elements demonstrated during national festivities and on days of national commemorations illustrate the 'homeland' as an object of identification and differentiation. The vital link to emphasize in this context is the intrinsic one between collective identities and collective ceremonies, the hypothesis being that collective rituals play a key role in the formation and the maintaining of nations and national identities.

Empirical evidence of the existence and also the character of collective/national identities is constituted by national holidays as holders of institutionalised practices with references to the national community, mythology and symbolism. Thus it is the officially recognised and institutionalised national day, as the Day of collective self-worship, that is to be described and analysed here. Through these rituals we may understand how national elites and nationals perceive the nation, and also how they wish other nations to perceive it. The celebration is often the result of long negotiations between the people and the elites. Celebrating the national day, i.e. the nation and

national identity, whether in large-scale collective events or small-scale expressions, has great affinity to expressions of nationalism. Even, the degree of enthusiasm expressed on National Days is one measure of national devotion and national identification. The significance of national days has been clarified in the nationalisation process of the Central and Eastern European countries, which, on the one hand, illustrates problems and stages connected to selecting a representative national day, and, on the other, suggests in a more general way that the national day is a significant element of nationhood.

Albeit some academic attention has been given to national days of mourning or days of Remembrance, to date we lack a detailed analysis of national celebrations in general. Moreover, no systematic and comparative analysis on national days – as significant elements of nationhood - has been attempted. It is therefore important to broaden and intensify, both empirically and theoretically, the research on national memory conducted so far to a limited extent. In other words, what is needed is a focus on the descriptive components of national days (Chapter Four), as well as a demonstration that national ceremonies serve as significant means of analysing the formation and maintenance of nations and national identities (Chapter Five).

Important historical research about national festivals during specific periods in a nation's history, in particular around the French Revolution, has been carried out. Ozouf in *Festivals and the French Revolution* (1988) and Amalvi in "Bastille Day: From *Dies Irae* to Holiday" (1996) have investigated Bastille Day. Zimmer accounts

for the Swiss National Day in *Forging the Swiss Nation, 1760-1939: popular memory, patriotic invention, and competing conceptions of nationhood* (1999) and Hattenhauer for the complexity of Germany's national celebrations from a historical perspective in *Geschichte der deutschen Nationalsymbole: Zeichen und Bedeutung* (1990). Kapferer has analysed the Australian Anzac Day in *Legends of People, Myths of State: violence, intolerance and political culture in Sri Lanka and Australia* (1988). George Mosse has made an essential contribution on the festivals of Nazi Germany in *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich* (1981). Mosse has also examined the formation of the German nation more generally in *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich* (1975). There also exist official reports on the national day in some European nations published by the state authorities. Even if the analytical qualities of such reports can often be questioned, policy-making in this matter is in itself interesting.<sup>1</sup>

#### **4.1 'Ceremonial Statistics': the Basics of the National Day**

National days have developed relatively late compared to national flags, which is the reason why a thorough historical background can not be provided here. This chapter will therefore commence with a working definition of the 'national day' after which the complex development of the European national days will be presented in three tables. However, the historical development about the national day will be explored with

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<sup>1</sup> Ministère de la Défense de France, *14 Juillet 2002: Bicentenaire de la Légion d'Honneur*. Dossier de Presse; Lord Chancellor's Department, "Remembrance Sunday". Constitutional Policy Division, "<http://www.lcd.gov.uk/constitution/cenotaph/remsun.htm/>", 2003; It is interesting to note that the debate

regard to the cases of France, Norway, Britain and Germany. The latter has been included as a counterexample.

Before proceeding with the individual cases, a framework for description must be established. In order to provide answers about the meaning as well as the function of the national day (Chapter Five), as the main national ritual, we need to look at the 'national day' systematically and ask:

- 1) What (event) is being celebrated or commemorated? This question must be answered first in order to place the celebrations within their appropriate socio-historical context.
- 2) Who participate in the ceremony? 'Participants' refers both to the people involved in carrying out the ceremony itself and to the general public/spectators. As regards the active participants, they may be civilians or they may represent the state or the military, and the national day may be 'popular' or mainly celebrated by the elite.
- 3) Which national symbols are displayed and used during the ceremony? Attention must be paid to the symbolic expressions of nationhood: national flags and national anthems are significant as essential 'shortcuts' to the nation.
- 4) Where does the ceremony take place? The location of the event and the national monuments that play an important role in the ceremony must be considered.

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is continuous, e.g. in Sweden a report on the Swedish National Day (6 June) was published as late as 1994. See: SOU, *6 Juni: Nationaldagen*, 1994:58.

These are the essential questions, and they must be answered in order to produce the basic ‘ceremonial statistics’ for the national day, and to understand its role in the process of nation building. We concentrate on the first two questions in the tables on European national days, and extend the analysis to include also the last two questions in the case-studies previously mentioned.

#### 4.1.1 A Working Definition of the ‘National Day’

Days of Festivities<sup>2</sup>, more or less public, have existed for a long time, but the affinity between the nation and the state produced a unique and new kind of official festivity in honour of the nation-state. The national day celebration is a mix of national and state elements, which are not easily separated.<sup>3</sup> Many of these holidays have also been declared public holidays and are free from work. The national celebrations in Europe are not identical, but there are common characteristics that at this early stage of the analysis may describe the more general features and practices of a national day:

- a) National days are celebrations of historic events related to the foundation of the nation-state, such as the signing of a constitution, the beginning of independence or the proclamation of a Republic.
- b) The use of ‘rallying’ and national symbols is integrated into the practices and the ceremony. The display of national flags, of national emblems and the singing of national anthems are essential components of the national day. The location of the event and the national monuments involved are also intimately

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<sup>2</sup> Holiday in Britain, from *holy day*, was originally a day of religious observance, but has come to refer to a day of either religious or secular commemoration or celebration, just as ‘fête’ in France, ‘Feiertag’ in Germany or ‘festa’ in Italy, etc., can have both religious and secular references.

connected with national symbolism. All constitute essential rallying points, used to highlight the nation in a varied manner and to promote national pride.

- c) Music constitutes an integral part of the national day, whether provided by military units, massed-bands or individuals. The music chosen sets the tone of the ceremony: what is played is naturally of great significance for the emotions that will be promoted.
- d) Procession or parades – military or civilian (or popular carnivals) – are central features of national celebrations and connected to music performances given.
- e) The national day relies on some form of collective participation of the nationals.

To sum up we may identify four key-features of the national day. The national day is:

- a holiday set aside for the people
- an annual reunion of the community intended to be a shared experience
- celebrated in honour of a historical and national event
- a symbol of the nation

Thus the main criterion of a successful national day is clearly marked out as a day of the nation, and one that involves the community. Many national days, as a result of political upheaval in various national communities, have been replaced by others, or are celebrated for changed reasons, an issue to which we return in the following chapter.

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<sup>3</sup> As a rule, national and state elements of the national day are conflated. For that reason the domains of the nation and the state will not be separated as regards the ceremonies on the national day.

## 4.2 Classification of the European National Day Ceremonies

We now turn to the events celebrated and/or commemorated in honour of the nation in Europe. Some European nations celebrate several days in honour of the nation, but one of them usually figures as the paramount national day. The 'nation-state' does not exist as a homogeneous cultural or political unit, but rather as an aspiration of one dominant culture. Although not wishing to ignore the multi-ethnic character of modern nation-states, the focus will be on the officially recognised national day, in which *one* national memory, connected to *one* dominant culture is being promoted.

What follows is a brief overall survey of national days. The flags of the European countries, presented in the survey in Chapter Two, were categorised as 'old', 'modern' or 'new' flags. This classification will continue as regards national days. In this way we can clearly see that the national day as a symbol of the nation is relatively recent. The national days below are categorised in chronological order, in accordance with the year of the first celebration, although the official date of institution may come later. Many nations have celebrated more than one national day throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which case the one most recently established will determine the classification 'old', 'modern' or 'new'.<sup>4</sup> Naturally, regional differences exist, which is taken into consideration when the general character of the celebration in question is described. The documentary materials on which these tables are based appear in the same order as in the tables below in Appendix 2.

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<sup>4</sup> The dates of appearance are by nature rough estimates with regard to the 'old' national days with a religious origin.





<p><b>England</b> 23 April</p>	<p>St George's Day</p>	<p>Remembrance Sunday has taken the character of the ND for Britain as a whole since 1919 (see Table 4:3 and case study). The 'legendary' celebrations of the Patron Saints of England (St. George), Scotland (St. Andrew) and Wales (St. David) had originally a religious character. St. George constitutes a symbol for English nobility, nationalism, and leadership in times of war. The legend of St. George slaying a dragon in exchange for a mass conversion to Christianity appeared in the 6<sup>th</sup>c. St. George was recognised as the patron saint of England after King Edward III made him the patron of the Order of the Garter in 1348. Richard I invoked St. George for protection, and Henry V declared him the official patron of England. Under the influence of the Protestant Reformation the cult of St. George declined, although the day remained a holy day of obligation for English Roman Catholics until the late 18<sup>th</sup> c. Today the celebrations in England on St. George's Day pass by quietly.</p>	<p>14<sup>th</sup> c. (1348)</p>	<p>Originally religious celebration</p>
<p><b>Scotland</b> 30 Nov.</p>	<p>St Andrew's Day</p>	<p>St. Andrew's Day and Burns' Night (25 Jan.), the birthday of the poet Robert Burns, are the main Scottish celebrations. St. Andrew was officially recognised as the patron saint of Scotland at the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath in 1320. St. Andrew's Day was celebrated as a religious festival before the Reformation (1517), and even if its importance diminished afterwards it did not disappear, as St. Andrew remained a symbol of national identity. As an indication of this we find that the "Order of Saint Andrew" ("Most Ancient Order of the Thistle"), an order of Knighthood, was established by James VII of Scotland in 1687. St. Andrew became the patron of Scotland after the Scottish victories against the English. He died bound to a saltire cross, which explains the saltire flag of Scotland. On St. Andrew's Day, St Andrews Societies usually arrange dinners with traditional food and music. The Scottish saltire is flown on all public buildings. The Scottish Parliament has yet to decide whether or not to make it a public holiday.</p>	<p>14<sup>th</sup> c. (1320)</p>	<p>-</p>
<p><b>Wales</b> 1 March</p>	<p>St David's Day</p>	<p>St. David's Day was a holy day until the Reformation, and is claimed to date back to 1120, when St. David was canonised by the Pope. It has been a national festival in Wales since the 18th century. Today it is celebrated by cultural societies and schools throughout Wales. A concert, by a 1000-member male choir, is held at St. David's Hall in Cardiff. The Welsh wear daffodils - a traditional emblem of Wales. The ND's are popular celebrations in Scotland and Wales.</p>	<p>18<sup>th</sup> c.</p>	<p>Popular Civilian</p>



**Table 4-2: 'Modern' National Days**

**MODERN NATIONAL DAYS**

<b>NATION</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>CELEBRATION COMMEMORATION</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TYPE</b>
<b>France</b> 14 July	National Day Bastille Day	Bastille Day commemorates the storming of the Bastille in 1789, i.e. the beginning of the Revolution and the forming of the 1st French Republic. Bastille Day was first celebrated in 1790 and as National Holiday in 1792. It was officially adopted in 1880. The ND is celebrated with a solemn military parade on Champs-Élysées as well as street parties all over France (see case study).	1790-92  (1880)	Popular Military  Public Holiday
<b>Poland</b> 3 May	National (Constitution) Day	Russia, Austria and Prussia carried out the first partition of Poland in 1772. On 3 May 1791 the Constitution was proclaimed. This was followed by celebrations in 1791-92, but the constitution was abolished later in 1792. The second partition, conducted by Russia and Prussia, took place in 1793. Polish sovereignty was declared (a second time) in 1918. However, patriotic demonstrations against foreign domination had broken out as early as 1891. Constitution Day was officially adopted in 1918 in connection with Polish independence. Celebrations of Constitution Day disappeared completely during WW2, and were forbidden during the Communist era, but were invoked again after the revolt of 1956. During this time Worker's Day (1 May) was celebrated as part of the Communist cycle of celebrations. As a contrast to the ND, popular participation is evident on two other public holidays: Independence Day (11 Nov.) celebrating independence of 1918, and the Anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw (15 Aug. 1920), which commemorates Polish victory over Russia. Poland's military tradition is displayed through large parades on these days and especially on 15 Aug.	1791-92  (1891-) (1918)  (WW2)  (1945-56)	State celebrations Civilian   Public Holiday
<b>Norway</b> 17 May	Constitution Day	Norway was ceded by Denmark to Sweden in 1814, and was officially in union with Sweden until 1905. Resisting Swedish domination it adopted a new constitution as early as May, 1814 (17 May). Constitution Day was introduced commemorating the Norwegian Constitution and the first large-scale celebrations took place in 1827. The ND has been celebrated ever since, with the exception of 1940-45 during the Nazi occupation when expressions of Norwegian nationalism were forbidden. In today's popular celebrations all over Norway, the Children's parades have a prominent place (see case study).	1827 (1940-45)	Popular Civilian  Public Holiday

<p><b>Greece</b> 25 March</p>	<p>Independence Day  (Feast of Annunciation)</p>	<p>Bishop Germanos of Patras hoisted the Greek flag over the monastery Agia Lavras on 25 March 1821, inciting the rise against the oppressors and signalling the beginning of the war for independence. In 1832 the sovereignty of Greece was established, although some sources claim liberation from Turkish rule came in 1827. The Decree according to which the Independence Day was to be celebrated was signed by King Otto in 1838 and the first celebration took place 25 March 1838. Independence Day is celebrated with a military parade in Athens in front of the Parliament and with street parades/parties all over Greece. The Church also plays a central role as the ND coincides with the Feast of the Annunciation, which commemorates the Archangel Gabriel's announcement to Mary of the birth of Jesus. This means that 25 March is also celebrated with colourful religious ceremonies, and constitutes a 'dual' public holiday.</p>	<p>1838</p>	<p>Popular Military Religious  Public Holiday</p>
<p><b>Denmark</b> 5 June</p>	<p>Constitution Day</p>	<p>Constitution Day is generally viewed as the ND, although an official ND is not designated. Constitution Day commemorates King Fredrik VII signing the first democratic Constitution on 5 June 1849. The first small-scale celebrations took place the same year. Constitution Day is today celebrated with political and democratic speeches in public places. The central celebration takes place in Copenhagen. Constitution Day is a half-day public holiday. Liberation Day (4 May, 1945) was celebrated in the decades after WW2, by people lighting candles in the windows. A national holiday in which popular participation is evident is the Queen's Birthday, 16 April, when children get a day off school. In Copenhagen people gather outside the Royal palace. Denmark also acknowledges 'Valdemar Day' (15 June) in commemoration of the Danish Flag (according to the legend fallen from the sky during a battle in 1219) and of the reunification with Southern Jutland in 1920, and 'Liberation Day' (5 May).</p>	<p>1849 (WW2)</p>	<p>State celebration Civilian  Half-day Public Holiday</p>
<p><b>Bulgaria</b> 3 March</p>	<p>Liberation Day</p>	<p>Liberation Day is celebrated as the ND in Bulgaria. It was first celebrated in 1880 as the Day of the Ascension of Emperor Alexander II. It has been commemorated since 1888 as the Day of Bulgaria's Liberation from Ottoman rule. Under Todor Zhivkov's rule (1953-1989) Bulgaria followed the cycle of Communist celebrations. Liberation from Nazi rule was celebrated on 9/9. The Bulgarian Parliament made 3 March a public holiday in 1990. Throughout Bulgaria citizens pause for a tribute to Bulgarian Independence. The celebrations contain military as well as civil parades and music performances. Other related national holidays include May Day (1 May), Bulgarian Alphabet and Culture Day (24 May), Union Day (6 Sept.) and Unification/Independence Day (22 Sept.).</p>	<p>(1880) 1888  (1953-89)</p>	<p>Popular Military  Public Holiday</p>

<p><b>Belgium</b> 21 July</p>	<p>Independence Day</p>	<p>France annexed Belgium in 1792. After the fall of Napoleon the country became part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815. In 1830, after the July Revolution, a provisional government declared independence on 4 Oct. The elected National Congress adopted the national constitution on 7 Feb., 1831. Independence is commemorated on 21 July: in 1831 the first Belgian monarch, Leopold I, swore the oath of allegiance to the Constitution on this particular date. The ND was established by law in 1890 and has been celebrated ever since, except during the world wars when it was remembered unofficially. This is a public holiday celebrated with public entertainment, fireworks and street parties and a military parade in Brussels in presence of the King and Queen of Belgium. It is also a day when all public buildings are decorated with flags and official speeches are delivered. Popular participation is evident on Armistice Day (11 Nov.), commemorated all over Belgium. A remembrance ceremony with a military parade is held at the <i>Ypres Menin Gate Memorial to the Unknown Soldier</i>. The Flemish community celebrates Flanders Day (11 July) in honour of the outcome of the Battle of Golden Spurs in 1302. This is a popular day of encompassing festivities, street parties, fireworks and a concert is given in Grande Place in Brussels. The French community celebrates Wallon Day (<i>Fête de la Communauté française</i>, 27 Sept.).</p>	<p>1890 (WW1) (WW2)</p>	<p>State Celebration Military  Public Holiday</p>
<p><b>Netherlands</b> 30 April</p>	<p>Queen's Day</p>	<p>Queen Wilhelmina (Queen, 1890-1948), born on 31 Aug., and Queen Juliana (Queen 1948-80), born on 30 April, celebrated the <i>Koninginnedag</i> on their birthdays (Queen Wilhelmina from 1891 and Queen Juliana from 1949). Queen Beatrix (reigning since 1980), on the other hand, did not choose the actual date of her birthday as Queen's Day, but reaffirmed the 30 April, the day she was installed as Queen, to honour her mother. Queen's Day had by this time developed into a ND. Although its date has changed, the concept of 'Queen's Day' has remained the same. Queen's Day is nowadays celebrated with a Royal visit to a different city each year. Fairs with children's parties, sporting events and flea markets are held throughout the country, often organised by the local <i>Orange verenigingen</i> (associations of supporters of the Royal Family).</p>	<p>1891 – (31/8)  (1949-) (30/4)</p>	<p>Popular Civilian  Public Holiday</p>
<p><b>Switzerland</b> 1 August</p>	<p>Day for the Foundation of the Swiss Confederation</p>	<p>The Swiss celebrate the founding of the original Confederation - <i>Die Ur-Kantone</i> - in 1291. The pact of mutual assistance against the Habsburg Monarchy was the origin of the Swiss Confederation, and is idealised in the familiar legend of William Tell. The original document of the pact – the <i>Bundesbrief</i> – was discovered in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. The first celebration was held in 1891 in order to commemorate the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original Confederation. The celebrations in Switzerland consist of the performance of historic plays and of traditional music. Fireworks and bonfires are organised in the mountains or by the lakes. In most communities a speech is delivered in honour of the foundation of the original Confederation. A military display, too, may be part of the varying celebrations. The ND is a half-day public holiday in most Cantons.</p>	<p>1891</p>	<p>Popular Civilian  Half-Day Public Holiday</p>

<b>Sweden</b> 6 June	National Day (Day of the Swedish Flag)	The Swedish ND commemorates the day Gustav Vasa was elected King in 1523 and the Constitutional reform in 1809. The ND used to be known as the Day of the Swedish Flag and the first 'flag-celebrations' were organised in 1893 at Skansen (a reconstruction of a 'mini-Sweden') in Stockholm. This celebration, consisting of music performances, is held in the presence of the Royal Family and broadcast on TV. The first official and large-scale celebration of the Day of the Swedish Flag took place in 1916, but the Swedish Flag has remained the main symbol of the ND celebrations. The ND (6 June) was adopted in 1983, and became a public holiday in 2005.	1893	State celebration Civilian
			(1983)	Public Holiday

**Table 4-3: 'New' National Days**

### NEW NATIONAL DAYS

NATION	NAME	CELEBRATION COMMEMORATION	DATE	TYPE
<b>Finland</b> 6 December	Independence Day	Before Independence, and in search of a Finnish identity the citizens of Finland celebrated Runeberg (poet), Lönnrot (compiler of the Kalevala) and Snellman (champion of Finnish national identity) as national heroes. From ca 1840 Runeberg Day constituted a ND with school celebrations and parades. The festivities spread to private homes, where candles were placed in the windows to mark the occasion. Today the Finns commemorate independence from Russia and the founding of the Republic in 1917. During the first decades this was a solemn occasion marked by patriotic speeches and religious services. Since 1970 Independence Day (6 Dec.) is celebrated with military parades but also with citizens' parties and university students' torchlit processions. The military formation gathers on Senate Square to mark the occasion. Medals are awarded for distinguished service to society, and a festive function is held at the presidential palace. This ceremony is broadcast on TV and watched by a large part of the population, and people go on lighting candles in their windows. The day has been a public holiday since 1937.	(1840)  1917	Popular Military  Public Holiday
<b>Lithuania</b> 16 February	Independence Day	Independence Day commemorates the restoration of the Lithuanian State and independence from German, Austrian, Prussian, and Russian occupation in 1918. (A related day is the Day of the Restoration of the Republic of Lithuania on 1 March 1990, honouring the restoration after Soviet rule). Independence Day was readopted in 1990, and is celebrated with parades, street parties and city concerts. Signatories of the original declaration of Independence of Lithuania are honoured at Rasų Cemetery in Vilnius. Honours ceremonies and distribution of state awards take place at the residential palace. The flags of the three Baltic states are ceremoniously raised in front of the presidential palace in Vilnius.	1918  (1940-)  (1990)	Popular Civilian  Public Holiday

<b>Estonia</b> 24 February	Independence Day	Independence Day commemorates the proclamation of the Republic of Estonia in 1918. Independence Day was officially readopted in 1989 as the Estonian national flag replaced the flag of Soviet Estonia. Independence from Soviet rule was again restored on 20 Aug., 1991. Today the ND is celebrated with a military parade at Vabaduse Plats, a Church service at Kaarli Church, and a Festive Concert in Tallinn.	1918 (1940-) (1989)	Popular Military  Public Holiday
<b>Latvia</b> 18 Nov.	National Day	On 17 Nov., 1918 Latvia passed a resolution to declare independence, and on 18 Nov. the sovereign power of Latvia's National Council was announced in a decorated National Theatre where the first celebrations were held. After the collapse of the Soviet regime the ND is today celebrated with a military parade at the Freedom Monument in the centre of Riga. The President, members of Government, politicians and the people place flowers at the foot of the national monument under the inscription 'To the Fatherland and Freedom'.	1918 (1940-) (1990)	Popular Military  Public Holiday
<b>Britain</b> 11 Nov.	Remembrance Sunday  (Armistice Day)	A ND for Britain does not exist in an official sense. However, Remembrance Day constitutes an unofficial ND for Britain. Remembrance Sunday was first commemorated in 1919, and commemorates today the Armistice of WW1 and all Britain's war dead. The main commemoration takes place with a military/civil parade past the Cenotaph to the Unknown Soldier in Whitehall in London, but there are remembrance ceremonies all over Britain. Commemoration takes place on the Sunday closest to 11 Nov. The British wear a red poppy (which is bought to contribute to veterans' charities) as a sign of remembrance in the weeks before and during the commemoration ceremonies.	1919	Popular Military  (Sunday)
<b>Czech Republic</b> 28 October	National Day Statehood Day	The ND commemorates the founding of the Republic of Czechoslovakia (28 Oct. 1918) after the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and was first celebrated in 1919. Celebrating the ND was forbidden 1939-44, and during the Communist era the day was celebrated as the Day of Nationalisation (1948-1989). The official ND, during this period, was Victory Day (9 May) commemorating the liberation of Czechoslovakia from Nazi rule and the end of WW2, and was celebrated with a military parade. The other main celebration took place on Labour Day (1 May) when mass-demonstrations were held. The celebrations of 28 Oct. as a ND started again in 1989, and have continued to gain ground ever since. Today the president delivers a speech, awards state decorations and holds a reception at the Prague Castle. Wreaths for the fallen are laid in Wenceslas Square in Prague and also at the grave of the first Czechoslovak President Masaryk. The military are part of the official celebrations. The ND has been a Public Holiday since 2000. Related national and popular holidays include: Day for Fight for Freedom and Democracy (17 Nov.) in memory of the students who died in the protest against the occupation in 1939, and also in memory of those who protested against the Soviet Regime in the 1980s. (This Day was recognised as International Student Day, 1942-89). The Day of the Prague Uprising (5 May) commemorates the revolt in 1945, Liberation Day (8 May) recalls the liberation in 1945, and the resistance during the Prague Spring 1968 is remembered on 21 Aug., the day when Soviet tanks moved into Prague.	1919 (1939-44) (1948-89)  (1989)	Popular Military  Public Holiday

<p><b>Iceland</b> 17 June</p>	<p>National Day Independence Day</p>	<p>The 1 Dec. was celebrated as a ND 1918-1944 when Iceland's path towards independence commenced. In 1945, however, the 17 June became the official ND in commemoration of the establishment of the Icelandic Republic and full independence in 1944 when Iceland broke away from the Danish Crown. The Republic was established on the birthday of the principal hero in Iceland's struggle for independence Jón Sigurðsson (1811-79), whose birthday had been celebrated all over Iceland since 1911. Today the president lays a wreath at the statue of Jón Sigurðsson and delivers an address to the nation from the Parliament House. Iceland is also represented ceremonially by the Lady of the Mountains (Fjallkonan) who appears in national dress and gives a recitation in prose in honour of her country. After independence in 1944 the ND was celebrated throughout with solemnity, but in later decades parades, musical performances and dancing in the streets characterise the afternoon and evening, while a solemn part (ceremonial speeches and wreath-laying) is confined to the morning. The ND was established as a public holiday in 1971.</p>	<p>(1918-44) 1945</p> <p>(1911)</p>	<p>Popular Civilian</p> <p>Public Holiday</p>
<p><b>Italy</b> 2 June</p>	<p>Republic Day</p>	<p>Italy celebrates the Republic formed after the referendum in 1946. The Italian anthem, too, was adopted that year. The Italian ND is celebrated with a speech given by the President in Piazza della Repubblica in Rome, and a parade of official choirs and various outdoor activities. The flag is important in the celebrations. The Italian ND has been a public holiday since 2003. Italy also celebrates Liberation Day (25 April).</p>	<p>1946</p>	<p>Popular Civilian</p> <p>Public Holiday</p>
<p><b>Austria</b> 26 October</p>	<p>National Day Day of the Austrian flag &amp; Day of the Declaration of Neutrality</p>	<p>The birthday of the Emperor Franz Joseph was celebrated (18 Aug.) in the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1867 onwards. With the proclamation of the first Republic in 1918, Republic Day (12 Nov.) was acknowledged as the main state holiday. The Corporate State celebrated 1 May in honour of the Constitution from 1932 onwards. From 1934 onwards 1 May was celebrated as Labour Day, Youth's Day and Mother's Day. In the National Socialist era 1 May, from 1938 onwards, was celebrated as the ND of the German People. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Republic celebrated the Day of the Austrian flag for the first time on 26 Oct. 1955. Then Austria's sovereignty was fully restored after the 'Nationalrat' had enacted the Federal Constitutional Law on the permanent neutrality of Austria. The ND is celebrated by Citizens' Walks all over Austria. A small military display takes place in Heldenplatz in Vienna, where new soldiers swear an oath to defend Austria. The Austrian President delivers a speech to the nation in the evening. The ND has been celebrated as a Public holiday since 1967.</p>	<p>(1867) (1918)</p> <p>(1932-34) (1934-38) (WW2)</p> <p>1955</p>	<p>State celebration Civilian</p> <p>Public holiday</p>



<p><b>Romania</b> 1 December</p>	<p>National Day</p>	<p>Romania's full independence from Turkey was acknowledged in 1878, and Romania became a kingdom under King Carol I in 1881. Until WW1, the Day of the Monarchy (10 May) was celebrated in honour of King Carol I. The present ND commemorates the Great Union in 1918 of all Romanians into a single state, i.e. the unification of Transylvania and Banat with Romania after the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The anniversary of the Great Union has been celebrated since 1918. However, after WW2 until 1989, the ND was celebrated on 23 Aug., marking Romania's changing of sides to the Allies and the liberation from Nazi occupation in 1944. The celebration of the Great Union received the status of a ND in 1989. It is celebrated with a special Parliamentary session, when the President delivers a speech. A military parade is organised every five years, and annual local celebrations with music, singing and dancing are organised in town centres. A large-scale celebration always takes place in Alba Iulia (the place of the Great Union).</p>	<p>(1881-)  1918 (1944-89)  1989</p>	<p>Popular Civilian  Public Holiday</p>
<p><b>Germany</b> 3 October</p>	<p>Unification Day</p>	<p>The unchallenged yearly pre-national festivity, 1871-1918, was the Birthday of the Kaiser, celebrated with a parade in his honour. Sedan Tag was also celebrated from 1873 onwards, but turned quickly into a day of disunity. Constitution Day (11 Aug.) was introduced by the Weimar Republic after the adoption of the constitution in 1919. For German ND's during the inter-war and post-WW2 periods see the case-study on Germany in this chapter. Unification Day (<i>Tag der Deutschen Einheit</i>) commemorates the unification of West &amp; East Germany since 1990. The main celebrations take place in a different German state every year. In 2004 it was suggested that future celebrations should be held on the Sunday closest to 3 Oct. as this would increase GNP by 0.5%. Due to strong protests, however, Unification Day remains a public holiday.</p>	<p>(1871-1918)  (1873-) (1919-30)  (1933-45) (1957-90)  1991</p>	<p>State Celebration Civilian  Public Holiday</p>
<p><b>Slovenia</b> 25 June</p>	<p>Independence or Statehood Day</p>	<p>The 'Day of the Uprising of the Slovenes' (27 April) against the occupying forces in 1940, referring to the creation of the Liberation Front (1941) fighting against the Nazi-regime (earlier Liberation Front Day), has been celebrated since 1945. Today it is a public holiday in which popular participation is evident. This Day stands in contrast to the Day of the Birth of the New Yugoslavia (29 Nov), which in 1943 became the official ND, and was celebrated with military parades during the Communist regime. Independence or Statehood Day became the official ND in 1991, after the declaration of Independence, and is celebrated with speeches delivered by government officials and concerts.</p>	<p>(1945-)  (1943-)  1991</p>	<p>Popular Civilian  Public Holiday</p>

<p><b>Slovak Republic</b> 1 Sept.</p>	<p>National Day Constitution Day</p>	<p>While Slovakia and the Czech Republic were united in the Republic of Czechoslovakia, the founding of the latter (28 Oct., 1918) was commemorated 1919-38. The celebrations were banned 1939-44, and during the Communist era the day was celebrated as the Day of Nationalisation (1948-1989). During this period the official ND was Victory Day or Day against Fascism (8 May) commemorating the liberation of Czechoslovakia from Nazi rule and the end of WW2. The other main celebration was Labour Day (1 May). Today's ND, Constitution Day, is commemorated in honour of the approval of the Constitution by the Slovak National Council in 1992. It has been a public holiday ever since. The Slovak Constitution became fully effective, after the Constitution of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic had been annulled in 1993 (1 Jan.) and this date has also been honoured since 1993. Constitution Day is celebrated by all state institutions. The President, the premier, the chairman of the parliament and other main politicians deliver speeches and festive concerts are performed by e.g. the National Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra. National days in which popular participation is evident are: Victory Day (8 May) and The National Slovak Uprising Day (29 Aug.), the latter celebrating the uprising against Fascism.</p>	<p>(1919-38) (1939-44)  (1948-89)  1992</p>	<p>State celebrations Civilian  Public Holiday</p>
<p><b>Croatia</b> 25 June</p>	<p>Statehood Day</p>	<p>During the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Republic Day (29/9) was celebrated in honour of the creation of the Republic in 1945. Before independence from Yugoslavia International Labour Day (1 May) and the Anti-Fascism Resistance Day (27 July), were celebrated. The latter by the republics on different days, e.g. in Serbia on 4 July. Statehood Day was celebrated on 30/5 until 2002, in memory of the first constitutional multiparty session in Zagreb. Since 2003 Statehood Day has been commemorating the Croatian Parliament's declaration of sovereignty and independence on 25/6 1991. Open air activities, sport competitions and concerts are organised on Statehood Day, activities organised by local authorities, central government and public institutions. The flag is displayed on all state and public institutions, and although the celebration is recently introduced the celebrations are relatively popular. Two related national holidays are Independence Day (8 Oct.) and the Day of Victory and Patriotic Gratitude (5 Aug). The former celebrates the unanimous decision in 1991 of the Croatian Parliament to break all state relations with Socialist Yugoslavia and has been celebrated since. The Day of Victory and Patriotic Gratitude commemorates the end of Serbian occupation. International Labour Day (1 May) and the Anti-Fascism Resistance Day (22 June) remembers the rebellion against Nazi Germany in 1941.</p>	<p>(1945-1990)  (1991-2002)  2003</p>	<p>State Celebration Civilian  Public Holiday</p>

<p><b>Russia</b> 12 June</p>	<p>Russia Day Independence Day</p>	<p>The commemoration of the anniversary of the <i>Great October Socialist Revolution</i> in 1917 (25 Oct. OS and 7 Nov. NS) was the major Russian celebration from 1918 onwards and became associated with decades of modernisation and later also with the victory of WW2. From 1991-2003 this day was celebrated as the 'Day of Accord and Reconciliation'. However, this quickly turned into a day of discord due to the memories of the civil war after the revolution, the mass relocations and political repression. Consequently 7 Nov. (NS) was abolished from the calendar of public holidays in 2004, on the grounds of being 'ideologically outdated'. After WW2, Victory Day (9 May), celebrating the victory of the Great Patriotic War, also became popular. It is today the most popular of all national holidays in Russia: annual commemorative events and celebrations with military parades in honour of the war veterans created early a victory cult, which still continues. Victory Day has been described as a solemn holiday commemorating the 27 millions lost during the war. However, the official ND today is Russia Day (12 June) commemorating the declaration of Russian sovereignty and the beginning of the post-Soviet era in 1991. It was adopted in 2004 as a public holiday and is characterised by state celebrations. Russia still also celebrates the socially significant days International Women's Day (8 March) and International Solidarity of Workers' Day (1 May). New national holidays, instituted by the State Duma in 2004, are: the Day of the Defender of the Fatherland (23 Feb.) and a National Unity Day (4 Nov.), the latter in honour of liberation from Polish occupation in 1612 and of the beginning of the 300-year reign of the Romanov Dynasty. It seems, however, that both days, have failed to increase Russian patriotism.</p>	<p>(1918-90)  (1991-2003)  (1945-)          2004</p>	<p>State celebration Civilian          Public Holiday</p>
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A few immediate observations will be made here as regards the tables above. A more detailed analysis is given in Chapter Five under the headings: ceremonial content, ceremonial choreography (design, style and participation) and ceremonial symbolism.

The contours of a pattern have been formed, as illustrated by the tables above, honouring particularly important political events (independence, liberation, unification, the constitution and the forming of a state) or national personifications (monarchs, saints, heroes) and golden ages.<sup>5</sup> As we have seen from the table most countries

<sup>5</sup> Naturally, there may also be other important national events that are not recognised in this context. It would also have been interesting to include countries mentioned briefly in Chapter Three, such as Albania, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova and Ukraine. However, it proved difficult to find reliable information about their national days as they have changed recently. In some cases, they

celebrate the birth of the nation under the heading 'national day'. The founding of the state, sovereignty, the constitution, independence or liberation, as constitutive elements, are all variations on the same theme of celebrating the free nation-state.

The first observation to be made as regards the appearance of the 'national day' is that it emerges much later than the national flag. The majority of national days appear during the 1800s and 1900s, and many are formalised in the 1900s. The 'old' national days, apart from Portugal's, were originally religious holidays that have survived into the modern era and, with time, have taken the form of a national holiday, notably in the cases of Ireland, Hungary and Spain.

The date of the first celebration of the national day and the date of its formal adoption, do not always coincide. However, the date of adoption may be significant as it leads us to the historical period of national assertion. In many cases we find that a late date of adoption is illustrative of interruptions in sovereignty and independence. Few nations, as is illustrated in the tables above, have an uninterrupted history of celebrating their present national day except Ireland, Greece, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland and Britain. Of these only Ireland's St Patrick Day constitutes an 'old' national day.

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have also been disputed. Besides, the development of their national days can be compared to the establishment of the national days in Croatia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Russia presented in the tables. One interesting example is the national day of the Republic of Macedonia, which is claimed to have been celebrated since 1903. It is known as Uprising Day or St. Elijah's Day (2/8) and is celebrated in commemoration of the Iliden rising against the Turkish army in 1903. On this Day, which is a public holiday, various academies hold gatherings and speeches in remembrance of the fallen are delivered by state officials at memorial monuments. Representatives of the government, the Corps Diplomatique and NG Organisations participate. Festivals, concerts and sport tournaments are also organised. The national flag plays an important role in the (popular and civilian) celebrations. Independence from Yugoslavia is celebrated on Independence Day (8/9). On that particular day in 1991 a referendum was held, on the basis of which Macedonia declared itself independent in January, 1992.

In many cases, it has been impossible to cover all days celebrated, or to include all the various changes that have taken place. For the sake of simplicity some political changes (for example under Communist and Nazist regimes) have only been briefly mentioned. As a general observation we may note that many of the former Central and Eastern European countries under Communist rule follow the cycle of Communist celebrations which in many cases included Liberation Day or Victory Day (liberation from and victory over Nazism or Fascism), Constitution Day (new constitutions) and Labour (Workers') Day.

With reference to the character of the national days there are a number of significant variables. Are they 1) popular events or state (elite) celebrations, 2) civilian or military by nature, 3) recognised by law as public holidays? The European national days vary in these respects, from celebrations characterised by speeches given by government officials in public places, to the participation of whole nations in processions, parades, carnivals and street parties. In other words, the dichotomy of 'popular celebration' (popular participation) vs. 'state celebration' refers to the degree of involvement of the population on the national day and to how encompassing the celebrations are. 'State celebration' indicates that some official celebration takes place, often in the capital where a speech is given in a nationally significant location. On a national level, the celebrations belonging to this category pass by fairly quietly. The term 'popular celebrations' indicates that the day, besides being recognised formally by the state, is also recognised by the people, whose participation is central to the celebrations.

As to the nature of the ceremonies, the question is whether the national day is celebrated with 'military parades' or in a more 'civilian' manner. Given these variables we can observe that most national days today are of a civilian nature. This means that street parties, traditional music and dance performances and citizens' parades may be organised. Usually the head of state and other officials deliver speeches in nationally significant places (e.g. in squares, in parliaments, at monuments), and medals may be awarded for distinguished service to society. Finally, it is interesting to note whether or not the national day is recognised by Law as a 'public holiday'. A public holiday refers to a day exempted from work, in many cases introduced to encourage the nationals to celebrate their nation. We will return to these variables and cases in Chapter Five.

### **4.3 National Ceremonies and Nation Building: Case Studies**

The focus of this part deals with the military national day of France (Bastille Day on 14 July), the popular and civilian celebration of Norwegian national identity (Constitution Day on 17 May), the commemoration ceremony in honour of the British war dead (Remembrance Sunday on 11 November) and the recently established national day in honour of the unification of West and East Germany (Unification Day on 3 October). These cases will be presented in the order they appeared as national days.

The cases have been chosen for closer examination for the following reasons: the national days represent different processes of nation building and it is therefore interesting to see how and when these nations asserted themselves symbolically

through their national days;<sup>6</sup> the national days also represent various ceremonial types regarding their purposes; they vary in character (state/elite, mass, military, civilian); the degree of their 'success', whether official or popular, varies to a great extent.

France, Norway and Britain all have long traditions of celebrating their national day, and popular participation is evident. Participation is made possible and reinforced by the national day being a Public Holiday in France and Norway, and in Britain by the commemorations being always held on a Sunday. Finally, Germany will be used as an analytical counter-case, where, among other characteristics, popular support for a national day is lacking. The attempts to find a suitable national day that have been made throughout German history have failed.

As pointed out before, some countries celebrate a few national holidays, but one Day usually figures as the paramount National Day. The descriptions to follow are brief surveys, in which focus will be on: (a) the history of the celebration/commemoration, (b) the ceremonial setting, (c) the participants, and (d) the symbols used in the ceremony.

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<sup>6</sup> As was mentioned in Chapter Two, these countries represent different symbolic regimes (old, modern and new). The symbolism of Britain is both old (flag) and new (Remembrance Sunday). France displays 'modern' symbolism. Norway is a relatively 'new' nation, although its symbolism clearly has 'modern' roots. The symbolic 'age' of Germany is both 'modern' (flag) and 'new' (Unification Day).

### 4.3.1 Bastille Day in France

France has three public holidays honouring the nation: the National Day (Fête Nationale on 14 July), Armistice Day (celebrating the Armistice 1918, on 11 November) and Victory Day 1945 (VE Day, Victory in Europe, 8 May).<sup>7</sup> Regarding the acknowledged National Day of France, it should be noted that the international reference to ‘Bastille Day’ is not recognised in France, where the national day is described by its date: ‘14 July’.<sup>8</sup>

The Bastille, state prison and symbol of the Ancien Régime and its arbitrary rule, was stormed on 14 July 1789, after which, in due course, it became the symbol of the republic and of its values of liberty, democracy and equality.<sup>9</sup> On the anniversary of this date in 1790, citizens and delegates arrived from all over France to proclaim their allegiance to the new Republic and to participate in the Fête de la Fédération. The cult around 14 July was the first true celebration of the French nation (in a modern sense), and the need to commemorate arose out of the wish to break with the past. As an official national holiday of the French Republic, 14 July was again celebrated in 1880, in memory of the capture of the Bastille but also in honour of the Fête de la Fédération (14 July, 1790). Amalvi<sup>10</sup> notes that the latter was national but also ecumenical in

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<sup>7</sup> Ministère de la Défense de France, *14 Juillet 2002: Bicentenaire de la Légion d’Honneur*. Dossier de Presse, 2002 ; *Programme Public: Bicentenaire de la Légion d’Honneur, Armées D’Aujourd’hui*, 2002; French Embassy Official Website: <http://www.info-france-usa.org/atoz/holidays.asp>

<sup>8</sup> Ministère de la Défense Official website: [www.defense.gouv.fr](http://www.defense.gouv.fr); City of Paris Official Website, <http://www.paris.org/Monuments/Arc/>

<sup>9</sup> Ministère de la Défense, *14 Juillet 2002: Bicentenaire de la Légion d’Honneur*. Dossier de Presse, 2002 ; *Programme Public: Bicentenaire de la Légion d’Honneur*. 2002 ; French Embassy Official Website “14 July”. <http://www.info-france-usa.org/atoz/14july.asp>

<sup>10</sup> Amalvi, “Bastille Day: From Dies Irae to Holiday”. 1996: 116-159



character, which helped to shift the attention away from the violent reality of 14 July in 1789 and the Revolution in general. In this manner the sceptics were reassured at little cost to the republicans. On such a basis, Bastille Day turned from being a *Dies Irae* to becoming the national holiday of France.

The reasons why Bastille Day in 1880<sup>11</sup> became an official feature of the French public calendar was that the Third Republic wanted to choose a 'glorious' day to celebrate the birth of France. In effect the Republic institutionalised a practice that already existed, as the Republicans had been celebrating this day since 1872. With the choice of Bastille Day the Third Republic wanted to make a direct connection to the ideals of the first Republic and establish a foundation for the new regime.

As the heir of the Revolution, 14 July seemed an obvious choice for the Republic to commemorate, although several dates were considered in the 1870s before it was decided which event of the Revolution to commemorate: it had been necessary to take into consideration the opinions of and the support from the various political groupings. The 14 July, as the national day, was described in terms of the rupture with the Ancien Régime, of the heroic capture of the symbol of tyranny, and as a way of avoiding references to the 'terror' that followed.

The only Day that ever rivalled the celebrations on 14 July was Armistice Day in 1918 (11 November) remembering the war dead. The Remembrance ceremony in 1920 is especially worth noting as this was a special national event commemorating the second

anniversary of the World War One victory of 1918, and the fiftieth of the founding of the Third Republic (a direct consequence of the French defeat in 1870).<sup>12</sup> The Unknown Soldier was then properly (re)buried at the Arc de Triomphe in the ceremony on 11 November (1920). In this way the sacred character of the Arch, as provider of a focal point for the nation's sacrifices, was enhanced. The tomb of the Unknown Soldier fully managed to draw the masses into the public sphere, an effect due to the potent Remembrance ceremony, the daily tending of the site and the eternal Flame of Remembrance (introduced in 1923).

Bastille Day, however, regained its place as the primary national holiday as the Unknown Soldier also became an integrated element in the 14 July celebrations: in 1919 a temporary Cenotaph was raised inside the Arc de Triomphe and included in the military parade on 14 July.<sup>13</sup> Basically, Bastille Day can be viewed as the result of a successful combination of the two essential national ceremonies on 14 July and 11 November.

### Ceremonial setting

For the location of the ceremony and its setting, the military procession starts officially at the *Arc de Triomphe* and continues down the *Avenue Champs-Élysées* in order to reach the *Place de la Concorde*. These sites are historically highly significant: the Arc de Triomphe, the Champs-Élysées, and the Place de la Concorde can indeed be

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<sup>11</sup> Gillis, *Commemorations*. 1994: 8-9; Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*. 1988

<sup>12</sup> Inglis, "Entombing Unknown Soldiers: From London and Paris to Baghdad". *History and Memory*, 1993: 7-31

<sup>13</sup> Inglis, 1993: 14, 23-24

considered as the significant national sites of France. The ceremonial route is part of the *Grand Axe* of Paris consisting of the *Grand Arc de la Défense*, the *Arc de Triomphe* (at L'Étoile), the *Obélisque de Luxor* (in Place de la Concorde), and the *Arc de Triomphe du Carrousel* (Palais du Louvre). Important monuments, in other words, play a central role in the national festivities, a topic to be further explored in Chapter Five.

The Arc de Triomphe, positioned in the large roundabout of L'Étoile and surrounded by Haussmann's boulevards, constitutes an appropriate starting-point for the 14 July ceremony. Chalgrin's Arc de Triomphe was commissioned in 1806 by Napoleon, after his victory at Austerlitz, but not finished until 1836. Engraved around the top of the Arch are the names of major victories won during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods. After 1830 the Arch was transformed to commemorate those who served and died for *La Patrie*, a message reinforced by François Rude's heroic sculptures and later by the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier remembering the dead of the two World Wars.<sup>14</sup> The tomb was placed at the Arc de Triomphe, which, in this way, being already the symbol of military triumph of France, became also a site for mourning and respect. The Arch with the Unknown Soldier provides not only the physical background for the ceremony but also its mental frame, connecting the ceremony to the powerful memories made in the name of France.

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<sup>14</sup> The names of less important victories, as well as those of 558 generals, are inscribed on the inside walls. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*, 2003; Therborn provides a detailed and interesting account of the development of European capital cities in "Monumental Europe: The National Years. On the Iconography of European Capital Cities", 2002: 26-47

The Place de la Concorde is the largest square in Paris and the site for the statues representing the French cities of Lille, Strasbourg, Lyon, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Nantes, Brest and Rouen, placed at each corner of the octagon as a symbol of the whole of France. During the Revolution it had at its centre the guillotine. (An ironic circumstance, one may think, when a *King* is invited as the guest of honour on Bastille Day). The square has had many names during the turbulent history of France, but regained its present peaceful name as if there were a wish to put an end to a violent era.<sup>15</sup> With this in mind, the military procession on Bastille Day offers a powerful contrast. Finally, the capital of Paris is in itself one of the most powerful symbols of France on the 14 July.<sup>16</sup>

## Participants<sup>17</sup>

The 14 July celebrations are divided into two phases: the morning characterised by official ceremonies and the afternoon reserved for entertainment, sports and other festive activities followed by popular festivals, neighbourhood and village dances and fireworks all over France. In terms of participants, the military procession, where quite naturally the main role is played by the military, is the centerpiece on 14 July. This

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<sup>15</sup> The Place de la Concorde was constructed 1754-1763 under the rule of Louis XV, and given the name Place Louis XV. After the Revolution it went through a series of transformations and several times it changed names, among which Place de la Revolution is one of the best known. See e.g. The Paris Pages Website, <http://www.paris.org/Monuments/Concorde/>

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. Agulhon, "Paris: A Traversal from East to West", 1998:522-553

<sup>17</sup> The description of the 14 July is based on first hand observations and recordings of the official TV broadcastings in 2001/2002. The President of the Republic, Jacques Chirac and the Prime Minister Lionel Jospin had an important role to fulfil in the ceremony. I am grateful to John-Paul Stonard (Courtauld Institute of Art, London) for his observations and recording in 2001 and to Anna Dezeuze (Courtauld Institute of Art, London) for the recording in 2002. Secondary sources include: Ministère de la Défense de France, *14 Juillet 2002: Bicentenaire de la Légion d'Honneur*. Dossier de Presse, 2002 ; *Programme Public: Bicentenaire de la Légion d'Honneur*. 2002; Ministère de la Défense Website:

procession provides the spectators with a historic display of national defence. Thus the survey of power even includes mounted decorated guards as well as modern artillery and transport. Geometry is central in this ceremony, and the procession is carried out with impeccable precision.<sup>18</sup> It is a ceremony held in the presence of a Guest of Honour, in 2001 the King of Spain.

A fly-past starts off the 14 July parade, with jets flying over Paris and leaving blue, white and red vapour trails together with a supersonic roar. This gives the spectators the primary message of French technological competence in the air. The President starts the military parade. He is driven in an open car from the Arc de Triomphe, down the Champs-Élysées, to the Place de la Concorde and the presidential podium. Here he is met by the Prime Minister and the Military Governor of Paris; the national anthem is played, and with the Republican Guard standing at attention, the President is greeted with the following significant words identifying the *national* flag at the same level as the honorary companies of the infantry:

M. le Président de la République, les honneurs militaires vous ont été rendues par un détachement de la Garde Républicaine. Ce détachement était composé de la musique, du drapeau, et d'une compagnie d'honneur du 1er régiment d'infanterie, et d'une compagnie d'honneur du 2e régiment d'infanterie.

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[www.defense.gouv.fr](http://www.defense.gouv.fr); Week's Newsflash: "July 14<sup>th</sup> Military Parade Avenue des Champs-Élysées, Paris"; <http://www.paris-touristoffice.com/va/events/14juillet.html>;

<sup>18</sup> The precision of the ceremony speaks for itself: The ceremony with troops and motorised vehicles are in position (09.10) to be inspected by the general officers commanding the parade (09.20). The detachments of honour of the Republican Guard are in position (09.45), and the President of the Republic arrives at Place de l'Étoile to review the troops before being driven to Place de la Concorde (10.00). Franco-Spanish entertainment follows: music by the Army and the Spanish Royal Guard (10.15 onwards), and a musical serenade by the Bagdad de Lann-Bihoué Fleet (10.20). After the entertainment, the military parade commences with a fly-past (10.30), followed by foot soldiers (10.35), police force on motorbikes, aerial parade of army light aircraft and a parade of armoured-vehicle troops (11.00). Finally, a fly-past and the parade of mounted troops (11.25) before the departure of the President of the Republic (11.35).

The anthem, the flag and the honorary companies of the infantry are national elements of honour bestowed on the President as the representative of France. In the context of 14 July, the French Tricolour is honoured in accordance with a precise ceremony of great patriotic fervour.<sup>19</sup> The ‘presentation of the colours’ was introduced once 14 July was adopted as a national day in 1880, and consists of the national flag being raised as the President reviews the military unit, during which music is played. Then a music parade follows.<sup>20</sup> The procession continues with representatives of the cadets graduating from various distinguished military institutions of the French army, navy and air force, such as the Saint Cyr military school. All units carry a standard of their own. The educational sections are followed by the professional detachments of officers and soldiers from the army, the navy, the marines, the air force, the special squads (such as the paratroopers), the Gendarmerie and other units. This is certainly an occasion of proud sincerity, in which units from colonies and territories also take part, where formerly ‘the French flag has flown’.

One of the last detachments on foot is the French Foreign Legion met with applause and cheers from the spectators. Its Legion flag remains the symbol of missions carried out to the bitter end.<sup>21</sup> The special uniforms of the Legionnaires, and their solemn marching-pace in parades – 88 steps a minute (*Le marche Le Boudin*), compared to the

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<sup>19</sup> French Embassy Official Website, <http://www.info-france-usa.org/atoz/flag.asp>

<sup>20</sup> In 2001, in order to welcome the Guests of Honour King Juan Carlos and Queen Sophia of Spain, the music parade commences with music by Bizet (*Carmen*), played by the bands of the Republican Guard and the Royal Spanish Guard. The Spanish detachment carries the King of Spain’s standard (the shield and the Royal Gold Crown from the Old Spanish flag of Castilla-Léon).

<sup>21</sup> The Foreign Legion was created by Louis Philippe in 1831, when it took part in the conquest of Algeria. The symbol of the Foreign Legion – the Legion Flag - is connected to the battle of Puebla in Mexico, in 1863, when 3 officers and 62 legionnaires made ‘heroic’ resistance against 2,000 Mexicans.

normal marching-speed of 115 steps a minute for all the other units – have provided them with a special place in the parade and in people’s imagination. Within the Legion, the role of the pioneers, *the Sappers*, is emphasised: they march majestically at a speed of only 80 steps a minute (*Le marche de la Légion étrangère*) to stress their significance and dignity.<sup>22</sup> The leather apron and the literally ‘path-breaking’ axe of their parade uniform further highlight their importance. The Foreign Legion also catches special attention as it displays foreign insignia captured by France in battle, which precede the different units within the Legion. It must be understood as the defender extraordinaire wherever France has been in ‘danger’. The Legionnaires, as described by a French Embassy source, “are volunteers of any nationality, race or creed, always ready to serve France [...] Foreigners by birth, the legionnaires have become Frenchmen by the blood they have spilled.”<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the military procession on foot the spectators have been entertained with parade music. Then the strength of the motorized units consisting of an aerial parade of army light aircraft and the armoured-vehicle troops is displayed. It is a dramatic sight when eight lines of flashing motorbikes, four lines of tanks, panzers, machineguns, and canons towed by trucks, move down Champs-Élysées. The motorized units also include several lines of tractors, large trucks and fire engines. Like the previous units passing

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The battle of Puebla in Mexico adorns every Legion flag. See: French Embassy Official Website United States, <http://www.info-france-usa.org/atoz/legion/history.asp>

<sup>22</sup> Ministère de la Défense de France, *Marches et chants de la Légion étrangère*. [http://www.defense.gouv.fr/histoire/musique\\_militaire/index.html](http://www.defense.gouv.fr/histoire/musique_militaire/index.html), 1992

<sup>23</sup> French Embassy Official Website in the United States, <http://www.info-france-usa.org/atoz/legion/what.asp>

on foot, the motorized detachments divide in two as they approach the Presidential Podium located in the middle of the Place de la Concorde.

Another final fly-past is followed by the parade of mounted troops<sup>24</sup>, before the President departs. The French Guard, on horse and in ceremonial dress, is accompanied by fanfares and music from military orchestras and by applause from the spectators, and constitutes the Grand Finale of a military parade that has been performed with great precision and self-discipline.

### Symbols in the Ceremony

The main symbols that constitute integral parts of Bastille Day are naturally the national flag and the national anthem. Reproductions of the French Tricolour can be seen all over Paris, and the national anthem - the Marseillaise - is heard on numerous occasions.

To start from the ceremonial focal point, the Arc de Triomphe, a huge Tricolour hangs from the vaulted ceiling of the Arch, and on either side, four Tricolours surround it. Displaying the huge tricolour in this way is a practice observed on all national holidays and on other grand state occasions.<sup>25</sup> Tricolours hanging from the lampposts also decorate both sides of the Champs-Élysées, and they are flown outside all official buildings. Altogether thousands of Tricolours are on display, together with French

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<sup>24</sup> In 2001 it was the French Guard together with the Royal Spanish Guard, in honour of the King and Queen of Spain, that constituted the mounted troops.

<sup>25</sup> On Armistice Day the President of France, on behalf of the nation, places a wreath with the inscription "*Ici repose un soldat français mort pour la patrie*" at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.



standards and banners (like regimental flags, carried by honorary guards, veterans and representatives from the armed services), within the ceremonial area of the procession.

The view from the Place de la Concorde is dramatic and imposing. The majestic version of the French Tricolour, hanging from the Arch, attracts particular attention and creates a suitable and patriotic background. The President and honorary guests are positioned in such a way in the Place de la Concorde that they are able to follow the whole military procession from beginning to end simultaneously, as do the millions of television viewers.

The Tricolour and the Marseillaise also play a vital role on 14 July in the flag ceremony (the presentation of the national colours) earlier mentioned. This ritual constitutes a most central moment in the overall ceremony involving the core symbolism of France. The significant words: “*ce détachement était composé de la musique, du drapeau, et d’une compagnie d’honneur du 1er régiment d’infanterie*” are of extra relevance here, as indicating the high national and patriotic status of the flag, which is raised not only as a signal to the troops but also in honour of the Head of State.

The precision of the ritual speaks for itself in another regard: *Au drapeau*<sup>26</sup> is played, followed by the chorus of the Marseillaise, whilst the flag is raised and lowered. The

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<sup>26</sup> *Au drapeau* is a ‘sonnerie’, i.e. a signal by clairon. *A l’étendard* (a sonnerie played on the trumpet), followed by the chorus of the Marseillaise, is otherwise played for those units within the army (e.g. l’arme blindée cavalerie, l’artillerie et le train) that have the military standard as their (national) emblem. The national flag is the emblem for all other military units. If both the military standard and the national flag are present at the same ceremony *Au drapeau* is played, indicating the prime importance of the national flag. Ministère de la Défense, [http://www.defense.gouv.fr/histoire/musique\\_militaire/index.html](http://www.defense.gouv.fr/histoire/musique_militaire/index.html)

chorus of the Marseillaise is played with increased national meaning and intention as it follows the flag ceremony (the presentation of the national colours) and even the instrumental version echoes the words:

To arms, oh citizens!  
Form up in serried ranks!  
March on, march on,  
May their impure blood  
Flow in our fields!

The Marseillaise<sup>27</sup> has had a turbulent past but the anthem has been used continuously throughout the history of modern France and has never been altered. The Marseillaise became the national anthem in a decree on 14 July 1795, but together with the tricolour it was banned by Napoleon and his Empire, by Louis XVIII in 1815 (the second restoration) and by Napoleon III – in all cases due to its connection with the Revolution. It was finally reinstated in 1879. Its strong position in the minds of the French public has been manifested at times when officials or others have tried to make alterations or modifications. President Giscard d'Estaing's attempt to have the anthem played at a slower tempo, following in the steps of the 19<sup>th</sup> century conservatives and their 'oratorio Marseillaise' for it to gain greater solemnity, raised a storm of protest<sup>28</sup>. The protests are an indication of the anthem being treated as a 'sacred' national symbol:

Some people are offended during national ceremonies, when they hear such vengeful verses as "these ferocious soldiers who slaughter our sons and wives" or demanding "that impure blood flow in our fields." But the majority of French people do not wish to change so much as a comma in their national anthem. Didn't the members of the Resistance in WWII sing it as a final and supreme challenge to Nazi-occupying forces as they fell beneath the bullets of the firing squad? [...] One can not tamper with that which is sacred!<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> La Marseillaise was written by Rouget de Lisle in 1792. Ministère de la Défense Website, "Cérémonial et tradition, Musique principale des troupes de Marine (actuellement Musique principale de l'armée de Terre)", [http://www.defense.gouv.fr/histoire/musique\\_militaire/index.html](http://www.defense.gouv.fr/histoire/musique_militaire/index.html); French Embassy Official Website: <http://www.info-france-usa.org/atoz/marseill.asp>

<sup>28</sup> Vovelle, "La Marseillaise: War or Peace". 1998: 71

<sup>29</sup> French Embassy Official Website: <http://www.info-france-usa.org/atoz/marseill.asp>; Ministère de la Défense. <http://www.defense.gouv.fr>

There can be no uncertainty about the aim of the military parade, which clearly is meant to visualize the strength of French defence and sovereignty. Generally speaking, the atmosphere during the 1 ½ - 2 hour ceremony on 14 July may be described as a 'warlike' rather than a 'peaceful' or 'civilian' experience.<sup>30</sup> There is, naturally, a difference between a highly organised parade of the French state and the celebrations stemming from feelings of belonging to the nation. For the French participate in celebrations (fireworks, street parties and other festivities) all over France and have done so since the official establishment of Bastille Day in 1880. The military parade and the associations of military victory have also been at the centre of the 14 July celebrations ever since. The way the military procession is performed emphasises the importance of the ceremony, with its geometric perfection, self-discipline and competence, and thereby is meant to give an image of the efficiency of the French military apparatus and ultimately of the dedication to France by the French people, qualities paraded also in front of the Heads of States of other nations. The official version of the celebrations stresses the republican elements of 14 July as a national holiday: its republican roots and the feelings of the citizens included in a republican nation:

To everyone in France, Bastille Day today means the solemn military parade up the Champs Elysées in the presence of the head of state. It is also a holiday on which each commune holds a local dance and fireworks. But above all, Bastille Day, or the Fourteenth of July, is the symbol of the end of the monarchy and the beginning of the Republic. The national holiday is a time when all citizens can feel themselves to be members of a republican nation. It is because this national holiday is rooted in the history of the birth of the Republic that it has such great significance.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The broadcast ceremony, in 2001, was followed by an interview with the French Defence Minister, Mr. Alain Richard, about the planned reorganisation of the French Military. FRANCE 2. TV Broadcast '14 July Parade', Champs-Élysées in Paris. 14 July, 2001

<sup>31</sup> French Embassy Official Website in United States, <http://www.info-france-usa.org/atoz/14july.asp>

The sentiment illustrated in the quotation above has not always been valid in all the circles of society. Once Bastille Day was seen as the model for ‘revolutionary saturnalia’ by the enemies of the Third Republic: “Each party does what it can. Christianity celebrates the holidays of its God, its heroes, its saints, and its martyrs; the monarchy had its splendid national calendar: Tolbiac, Bouvines, Taillebourg, Marignano, Arques, Ivry, Rocroi, Fontenoy, Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena, Algiers, Sebastopol, Magenta. The Republic celebrates cowardice, treason, and murder.”<sup>32</sup>

This kind of animosity is absent these days. Bastille Day stands today unchallenged, and the memory of the Revolution and of the storming of the Bastille now belongs to the entire nation, despite political differences. The French Revolution is not a major stake in the battle for a collective memory, and ‘the national holiday’ among the French has ‘been drained of its historical and political substance’ and constitutes today a Day of Unity rather than a day of controversy and discord.<sup>33</sup>

Bastille Day is a celebration of pomp and circumstance, in which the military strength of France is displayed - nationally as well as internationally. The 14 July is the manifestation of a nation-state examining itself nationally, and moreover manifesting its potential to deal with aggression. The perfected parades are predominantly military but ‘emergency services’ also participate – as if to illustrate France’s capacity to deal with natural and civil disasters as well. But there can be no question about the relations between the military procession and the violent and warlike history of France. In

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<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Amalvi, “Bastille Day: From Dies Irae to Holiday”, 1996:129

<sup>33</sup> Amalvi, 1996:118

connection with the internal conflicts in the aftermath of the Revolution, the military procession also manages to send a message that France is able to deal with serious domestic conflicts. In fact, the ‘marching’ boulevards of Paris were built to be able to counteract any domestic revolutionary forces. The militaristic ceremony of 14 July is hardly coherent with the wish for a peaceful world. The claimed commitment to peace in a European context – France is one of the founding members of the European Union – makes the military parade and procession a reminder of the events and the traditions of the past in which the celebrations were formed.

#### 4.3.2 Constitution Day in Norway

Norway has a longstanding tradition of celebrating its national day, in Norway known as *Grunnlovsdagen* (Constitution Day), in honour of the founding of the Norwegian Constitution, established in Eidsvoll on 17 May 1814. Constitution Day was celebrated for the first time officially in 1827. To mark this historic occasion Norwegians dress up in national costumes, and large-scale processions are organised in towns and villages throughout the country. The central celebration takes place in Oslo, where the 17 May procession is held on *Karl Johann Gate* (Karl Johan’s Avenue) in the presence of the Royal Family.

As stated in Chapter Two, Norway’s history is closely linked with the neighbouring Kingdoms of Sweden and Denmark. During the Napoleonic wars, Sweden (and its Crown Prince, ex-Marshal of France) had taken part in the victorious alliance against Napoleon, whereas Denmark, which had sided with France, lost Norway to Sweden.

Different sections of Norwegian society wanted independence, and a popularly elected National Assembly was summoned to Eidsvoll outside Christiania, now Oslo, in April 1814 to provide Norway with a Constitution of its own. This work was successfully brought to a conclusion on the 17 May 1814. On the same day the Assembly elected a new King for Norway, the former Prince Christian Fredrik of Denmark who since 1813 had been 'Stattholder' of Norway.<sup>34</sup> The King was given the name Haakon VII, which manifested the wish to link the newly formed Norway with the old free Kingdom of Norway and the dynasty ruling Norway before 1350. Eriksen writes:

When Norway became independent, its first king was recruited from the Danish royal family. He was nevertheless named Haakon VII as a way of stressing the (entirely fictional) continuity with the dynasty of kings that ruled Norway before 1350.<sup>35</sup>

In July 1814 Sweden attacked Norway, and Norway had to join Sweden in a union. The independence movement of 1814 that formed as a result was shaped out of very different hopes and fears. Some groups wanted a reunion with Denmark while others were clearly anti-Danish or had anti-Swedish feelings. Whatever the objections, the various political groupings united and the result was a powerful nationalistic movement, wishing to restore Norway to its former glory. This national resurgence was to be expressed in celebrations on 17 May once they started a few years later. As concomitants we find strong national elements in many areas of Norwegian society in the years to come, and an identity started to form connected to national culture, history and symbolism. A significant dimension of this identity-forming process was also Norway's relation to the neighbouring and dominant Kingdoms:

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<sup>34</sup> Mykland, "The 17<sup>th</sup> of May: A historical date and a day of national celebrations". 1996

<sup>35</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. 2002: 102-103

Ethnic symbolism referring to the ancient language, religion, kinship system or way of life is crucial for the maintenance of ethnic identity through periods of change. Generally speaking, social identity becomes most important the moment it seems threatened. [...] in the creation of a Norwegian ethnic identity in the nineteenth century, an imputed genealogical continuity with early medieval Viking chiefs was stressed as an argument for the uniqueness of Norwegians in relation to Swedes and Danes, who were culturally close.<sup>36</sup>

The Swedish authorities ‘acknowledged’ and did not abolish the earlier established Norwegian constitution in May 1814 so that dissolving the union in 1905 was rendered relatively easy from a technical point of view. Thus, the Constitution survived the union, and remained the same in contrast to other European Constitutions, established in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic years. These are important explanations as to why 17 May has survived in people’s minds as the most important date in Norwegian history.

The first private celebrations on 17 May took place in the Norwegian town of Trondheim in the early 1820s, and became more public in 1823 when the first newspapers reported the event called ‘Constitution Day’. In 1827, the Day was officially celebrated for the first time in the capital Christiania. From these early times 17 May has been celebrated as National Day as well as Liberation Day. At the time, the celebrations caused uproar in Sweden and the Swedish King Karl Johan regarded the celebrations as demonstrations against the union, which they were to a great extent during certain periods. It was not until after his death in 1844 that 17 May was celebrated to the full.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Eriksen, 2002: 68-69

<sup>37</sup> Mykland, 1996

The celebration of the Norwegian national day has undergone many changes, which are expressions of political developments. For example, in the 1820s, the Norwegian political focus was directed towards the defence of the Constitution, i.e. the foundation of Norway's independence. Those were also the themes of the first 17 May celebrations where 'Guard the Constitution' was a frequent motto on the banners. By the 1830s Karl Johan had resigned himself to the fact that the Norwegian Constitution could not be touched without a war.<sup>38</sup> This was immediately reflected in the celebrations becoming more celebratory rather than defensive and guarded. In the second half of the century, a significant element was included in the festivities and the national procession: a children's parade. The first Children's Parade took place in 1870 on the initiative of the writer of the national anthem and the Nobel laureate, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. In 1889 girls took part in the Children's Parade for the first time, and in the following years more women joined in the processions. This parade is still the most unique and distinctive part of the Norwegian national day.<sup>39</sup>

In the 1870s to 1890s the old ruling elites stood against the liberal urban citizens and the farmers. When conflict between these groups developed, the Conservative and Liberal parties were formed. During the above mentioned decades the 17 May turned into a day of discord and disunity when the two political groups fought their battles. However, as the struggle for independence intensified, the different factions of Norwegian society started to unite.<sup>40</sup> The sentiments towards the Union can be

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<sup>38</sup> Steine, "The Military in 1905", 2003

<sup>39</sup> Mykland, 1996

<sup>40</sup> Sweden rejected Norwegian demands for independence and wanted to demonstrate its supremacy in the Union. The relationship between the two countries was further strained due to the growth of Swedish



illustrated by the words of the Norwegian national hero and anti-unionist, Fridtjof Nansen, in a most significant speech in Oslo on 17 May in 1905:

A tiger will fight for its young as long as it can move a limb; and a people is surely not poorer spirited than a tiger. It will defend its independence and its hearth to the utmost of its abilities. Of this we are sure: come what may, we must and shall defend our independence and right of self-determination in our own affairs. On these rights we must now stand or fall.<sup>41</sup>

The Norwegian Parliament reached the unilateral decision a few weeks later no longer to recognise King Oscar II as King of Norway. The union with Sweden was hereby dissolved on 7 June 1905. Before its dissolution, ‘independence’ had become the focus for all 17 May celebrations and processions all over Norway, and the population was more united than ever before. As an enlightening example we find that the national flag had appeared with a large ‘YES’ across it and the text ‘13 August 1905 – we love this Land!’ (13 August was the date of the Norwegian plebiscite that overwhelmingly supported the dissolution of the Union.<sup>42</sup>)

The 1920s and 1930s brought new conflicts on the agenda, this time between the middle and working classes. The middle classes participated in the processions but protested against the internationalism of the working classes. The working classes, however, were encouraged by their leaders to keep the class struggle alive and to ignore

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protectionism. In 1895 the Swedish Parliament repealed the laws that in practice had created a Norwegian-Swedish common market. This repeal had serious effects on the Norwegian economy. As a result, in 1895 both Norway and Sweden prepared themselves for military action. Norway started, for example, to modernise its fortresses Fredriksten and Kongsvinger and fortified strategic places along the border, which was seen as a provocation. In 1905 it was clear that the Union did not have a future and the union-friendly Norwegian Prime Minister Francis Hagerup resigned in March 1905. Sørensen, “1905 – A Peaceful Separation”, 2004

<sup>41</sup> Sørensen, 2004

<sup>42</sup> The Norwegians voted 368,208 to 184 in favour of the break-up of the union. Women did not have the right to vote, but 250,000 signed a petition supporting its dissolution. Sørensen, 2004; Steine, “The Military in 1905”, 2003

‘the bourgeois celebrations’, so they held alternative celebrations on 17 May.<sup>43</sup> As could be expected, the Nazi occupation (April 1940 - May 1945) unified the population. During this time all expressions of Norwegian nationalism – such as the 17 May celebration of the Constitution – were forbidden. The national poet Nordahl Grieg interpreted the feelings of the Norwegians about not being able to celebrate their National Day: “Now stands the flagpole bare behind Eidsvoll’s budding trees. But in such an hour as this we know what freedom is.”<sup>44</sup> The post-war years, free from Nazi domination, turned the focus towards democratic rights and fellowship on 17 May. It was not until the question about Norwegian membership in the European Community was debated that disunity was again manifested. The display of some European Union flags on Constitution Day in 1972 was a symbolic demonstration met with protest. The celebrations in 2002, too, were used to make a political statement. The locals of Vardö, a small community threatened by unemployment and migration, hoisted a white flag at half mast together with the Norwegian flag to show the rest of Norway, in the midst of celebration, that a town was about to disappear.

The examples provided above illustrate the importance of Constitution Day as a forum for expressing national identity as well as ongoing political issues. The 17 May celebration has, since the first official celebrations in 1827, been held with the neighbouring countries in mind, and became in the light of mass-participation, a powerful platform to express political opinions. In the union era of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was felt in some degree that Sweden could represent a threat to Norwegian

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<sup>43</sup> Mykland, 1996:4

<sup>44</sup> Mykland, 1996

independence. Similarly, the experiences of being a small and powerless nation under German occupation gave the celebrations of 17 May a deeper meaning in the Cold War years (1948-90).

Constitution Day can best be described as a sincere and joyful national celebration marked by flag-waving, national music, national dress, parades, speeches, church services, and the laying of wreaths at war memorials. The Royal Family plays a central role as they greet the procession of Oslo's school children from the balcony of the royal palace. In his capacity of the Head of State, the King of Norway symbolises the nation.

### Ceremonial setting

Constitution Day is celebrated all over Norway, but the primary celebration and parade take place in Oslo on its main avenue *Karl Johann Gate*, built and named after King Karl XIV Johan of Sweden (reigning 1818-1844).<sup>45</sup> It seems ironic that it was this street that was to become the place for the main national celebrations and parade as King Karl Johan did not take the expressions of Norwegian nationalism lightly. Instead he tried to counteract and even outlaw the celebrations of 17 May, for example, in 1828 when he went to Oslo to try to prevent the national day from being commemorated. Outlawing the national celebrations, however, did not have any effect on the Norwegians in the long term. Moreover, the students at Oslo University tried actively to encourage people to honour the date of the Constitution as early as 1829. They made their patriotic sentiments clear on a document posted on the University gate, quite

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<sup>45</sup> Leiren, "1905 - Norway's defining moment". 2005

suitably located on Karl Johann. Finally, the Swedish authorities had to give in to the expressions of Norwegian nationalism and the celebrations of 17 May developed successfully in the 1830s. The avenue Karl Johann has from the beginning been the very centre for the display of Norwegian identity, and throughout history it has been decorated with national flags on 17 May. In relation to the manifestation of Norwegian identity we find that the flag, in particular, has played an important role as noted in Chapter Two.

### Participants <sup>46</sup>

The celebrations on Constitution Day start with local flag-hoisting ceremonies throughout Norway, and with the singing of the national anthem '*Yes we love this Land*' (Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson), and are unique in the sense that adults and children participate in towns and villages all over the country. Numerous organisations take part in the Children's Parade, the paramount event of the Day, from Scouts and football-clubs to Christian societies.

The celebrations are unique as also having the character of a Children's Festival. In Oslo thousands of school children, forming units in a section of their own, walk in the main parade. Each unit is preceded by two flag-bearers carrying large national flags, by their special school banners and by school-bands, and they march up the avenue of Karl Johann and pass the royal palace saluting the King of Norway (King Harald V) and the Royal Family.

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<sup>46</sup> This presentation is based on interviews, observations and broadcast by NRK 1. 17 May. 2002.

More or less all schools and children in Norway are involved, parading in the centre of their local communities in the morning of 17 May. The children's participation constitutes a remarkable element – even the focus – of the national celebrations, to the extent that Constitution Day has received the unofficial name of Children's Day.

Special radio and television programmes of the celebrations are broadcast from all over Norway by NRK1. The festivities in Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø, Lofthø, Trondheim, Vaga, Treklang, Lofthus-Haranger, and Valdresflya, follow a similar pattern: long parades with flag-bearers, school children, massed-bands and national music. Presenters, participants and spectators alike are dressed in the national costume (Bunad). Norway itself is greeted on its birthday with salutes of guns. Below is an excerpt from the Prime Minister's speech on 17 May 2003:

Today is the day all Norwegians look forward to every year. May 17 has become a magic date, a day for parades, music and ice cream. Throughout the length and breadth of Norway we come together – people of all ages, from all walks of life – to celebrate our national unity, our democracy and our traditions. Together with the generation that will carry the nation forward, we salute the flag. We recognise and commemorate those who fought to defend our freedom. And we honour the open-minded and forward-looking authors of the Norwegian Constitution of 1814. Today we celebrate the birthday of our nation. Most of us have a strong national identity. We are proud to be Norwegians. We are proud of our country's achievements. This should not be seen as exaggerated nationalism. Norway is becoming more and more of a multicultural society. I am delighted to see that all kinds of people, with many different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, are celebrating May 17. Together we are celebrating ideas and ideals rather than ethnic origin. We must take care not to encourage negative nationalism. Nobody has a right to privileges at other people's expense. But we do have the right to cultivate pride in our national identity. Everyone needs to feel that they belong somewhere, that they are part of a community. We are attached to our family, to our friends, to our colleagues, to our profession, maybe to a political party or a religion, or to a geographical area such as a nation. Most of us feel attachment to a combination of these groups. This is a legitimate need. When we feel that we belong somewhere, the quality of our lives improves. Let us remind ourselves today about the right to be proud – and about the dangers of self-righteousness.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Prime Minister Bondevik, "Speech at 17 May Celebration". Carderock Park, Maryland 17 May, 2003.

As is evident from the above account, a huge number of Norwegian citizens are involved in the festive celebrations on 17 May. The participation is more or less completed by the tradition of local communities organising special festivities, e.g. street-parties, and private citizens have parties of their own with their families, friends etc. – a visible token of the importance and popularity of the Day among Norwegians.

Constitution Day is celebrated by Norwegian Communities around the world.<sup>48</sup> A most ambitious programme was planned for the celebrations of 17 May in 2005: Norway's Centennial Anniversary of Independence in 1905. Over a hundred concerts, festivals, exhibitions, exchange programmes and seminars were held world-wide. The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was responsible for the activities internationally, and also for the national commemoration in Norway.<sup>49</sup>

### Symbols in the Ceremony

Flags, flags and more flags! The Oslo parade on Karl Johann's Avenue constitutes a colourful sight. An innumerable number of national flags are displayed and waved by participants and spectators. It is not only a parade of citizens and children but also a parade of flags. There are a great many of them carried along in the parade, for example, those preceding the school-units (see above).

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<sup>48</sup> See e.g. "17th May Celebrations", <http://www.norway.org.uk/edinburgh/events/17mayphoto.htm>, 08/07/2004; Bondevik, "Speech at 17 May Celebration", 2003.

<sup>49</sup> Norway, the Official Website in the UK, "Welcome to Norway's Centennial Anniversary in 2005", 2004

Karl Johann's Avenue itself is decorated with large national flags on both sides of the avenue, enhancing the solemn identity-creating character of the celebrations. The flag and the national day are two intimately linked expressions of Norwegian identity and the long struggle for independence. The Norwegian flag dates from 1821 and the celebrations of the national day from 1827, a significant decade for the assertion of nationhood in Norway's history. The Norwegian flag as well as Constitution Day were officially recognised when Norway became independent in 1905.

National music is most important in the festivities of 17 May, and solemn as well as stirring national songs are included in all celebrations in Norway. When 17 May was celebrated officially for the first time in 1827, the national anthem at the time – *Sons of Norway* (*Sønner av Norge* by H.A. Bjerregaard) – was sung together with other national songs such as *While the Nordic Sea is Roaring* (*Mens Norrhavet brusar* by C.N. Schwach), and *How wonderful my homeland!* (*Hvor herligt er mitt fødeland*). *Sons of Norway* became an emotionally charged song in 1828 when the Swedish King, Karl Johan, came to Norway in order to try to counteract the 17 May celebrations. A few particular songs deserve to be mentioned in the celebrations: *We are a nation too* (*Vi ere en nation vi med* by Gretry/Wergeland), *The Land We Inherited* (*Landet vi arvde* by G. Lorentzen), but above all the National Anthem *Yes we love this Land* (*Ja, vi elsker dette Landet* by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson). The first version of “Yes, we love” was written in 1859, and it became Norway's National Anthem on 17 May 1864, on the

50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution.<sup>50</sup> The titles of these songs speak for themselves.

Closely linked to the national colours is another main symbol, the national costume (the Bunad), which has become a symbol of nationhood. It is a double-shuttle woven woollen skirt or dress with a jacket and scarf for women. For men the Bunad consists of an embroidered and colourful three-piece suit.<sup>51</sup>

A red ribbon or band worn by the participants of the parade as well as by the spectators also underlines a strong element of national identity. The red ribbon is hung on the left side of the chest – over the heart – in order to constitute a symbolic link between Norway and the individual.

As a most important national symbol, the Royal Family represents the nation in different regions of the country on Constitution Day. School children from the neighbourhood participating in the Children's Parade are received by the Crown Prince and Crown Princess outside their private home in the municipality of Asker, a tradition established in 1946. The King and Queen, according to custom – together with the Crown Prince and Crown Princess – also greet the people at the climax of the ceremony during the main parade from the balcony of the royal castle in Oslo. The Monarchy, and the Royal family, constitutes a focal point for the Children's Parade on Constitution

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<sup>50</sup> Bristow & Reed, *National Anthems of the World*. 1993

<sup>51</sup> Eriksen, 2002: 101-102



Day. The existence of the Norwegian Monarchy itself is a significant symbol of statehood achieved after a century long struggle for independence.

### 4.3.3 Remembrance Sunday in Britain

Britain consists of three main national groups: the English, the Scots and the Welsh, and therefore one national day does not exist in an official sense. While the English have had the privilege of defining the concept of ‘Britishness’ historically, the different perceptions of nationhood on the other hand are illustrated in the ‘legendary commemorations’ of St. George in England, St. Andrew in Scotland, and St. David in Wales (see table presented earlier). In Scotland and Wales, these national days have been days of national (political or cultural) promotion and pride, celebrated with a carnival of national symbols, but they are not ‘public holidays’. Since the 1990s, there has been a growing interest in St. George’s Day in England, but it generally passes by fairly quietly. The lack of an official national holiday for the whole of Britain is compensated for by the extensive commemorations on Remembrance Sunday<sup>52</sup> (Armistice Day) all over the country. It is particularly in its ceremonial expression (especially in the commemorations of Remembrance Sunday) that Britain acquires a national ‘quality’. Most communities in Britain have a war memorial erected after World War One, around which commemorations take place on Armistice Day.<sup>53</sup> If we compare these commemorations to the ‘legendary’ ones of England, Scotland and Wales, we find that the latter have never been as successful in terms of scope or number

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<sup>52</sup> Remembrance Sunday is commemorated on the second Sunday in November, or on the Sunday nearest to 11 November. It is not a public holiday in the traditional meaning, but the ceremony being held on a Sunday, the day is automatically free from work.

<sup>53</sup> See e.g. National Inventory of War Memorials, “The Conservation of War Memorials”, 1997

of participants. Besides the extensive Remembrance ceremony in London on 11 November, church services and ceremonies are held all over Britain precisely at 11 a.m. in order to mark the signing of the Armistice in 1918. The main representatives of the State are involved as the main sponsors as well as the chief participants in the commemoration. So in this way Britain is united in mourning the war dead. On the basis of such empirical evidence Remembrance Sunday can be considered as the unofficial national day of Britain.

These remembrance ceremonies and church services started in 1919, together with an earlier ceremony of Remembrance, replaced by the actual Cenotaph ceremony in 1921. The solemn ceremony at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, London, proved so popular that no new national memorial or new ceremony was created after World War Two. Instead the remembrance ceremony was extended to honour all British and Commonwealth servicemen and women who had died in the two world wars and in other armed conflicts.

### Ceremonial Setting

The 'Cenotaph' refers to an *empty tomb* and it is raised in memory of the war dead.<sup>54</sup> The construction of a temporary Cenotaph was proposed in response to the need for a saluting point in Whitehall during the Victory March on 19 July 1919, and this

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<sup>54</sup> The actual resting place for the *Unknown Soldier* is in Westminster Abbey. See Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning: The Great War in European cultural history*. 1995; Inglis, 1993: 7-31

provided the foundation for what was to become the Cenotaph Ceremony.<sup>55</sup> More specifically, it was after learning that the French would include a ‘saluting point’ at the celebrations of 14 July, where French troops were to salute a great catafalque under the Arc de Triomphe, that it was decided that the planned Victory March through London needed a similar focal point.<sup>56</sup> Britain had no Arc de Triomphe, so a design by Sir Edwin Lutyens<sup>57</sup> was designated as a Cenotaph and a non-denominational shrine of the nation, in order to re-direct the notion of the (French) Catholic Catafalque. The Victory March in London in July 1919 was a success and no less than 15,000 troops, led by the victorious commanders, took part. The march passed all the essential state buildings, and after being reviewed by the King at Buckingham Palace it continued via Trafalgar Square towards the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey.

The following day, the Cenotaph at once became the focus of attention: photographs of General Haig and Admiral Beatty saluting their dead comrades by the monument were reproduced in the British press. Lutyens’ monument, in contrast to the French catafalque removed after 14 July, was so “powerfully evocative of the mood of collective bereavement that later that year, it was transformed by popular demand into a permanent, indeed *the* permanent British war memorial, fixed to the place in Whitehall”<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> The original march was followed by peace celebrations, entertainment and fireworks in St. James’s Park, Regent’s Park, Green Park and Hyde Park. Homberger, “The Story of the Cenotaph”, 1976: 1429-30; King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*. 1998

<sup>56</sup> Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. 1990: 94-95

<sup>57</sup> The Cenotaph in Whitehall and the Memorial to the Missing at Thiepval on the Somme are both the works of Sir Edwin Lutyens and are considered two of the most important British war memorials. See Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning: The Great War in European cultural history*. 1995

When Armistice Day was celebrated in November 1919 with the placing of a wreath at the Cenotaph, a two-minute silence commencing after Big Ben struck the 11<sup>th</sup> hour was also included. The two-minute silence was to develop into a tradition.<sup>59</sup>

At 11 a.m. on 11 November, Armistice Day, every year, almost all activity, whether private or public, was interrupted for two minutes to observe the Great Silence in memory of the dead. Formal ceremonies with prayers, the laying of wreaths at memorials, and speeches were held in town squares, on village greens, in shops, offices, factories, schools and other places. Where there was no formal ceremony people went to windows or into the street to form an impromptu congregation. [...] Commemorating the war dead was regarded as a sacred act. The 11<sup>th</sup> of November became known as 'Armistice tide', giving it the air of an ancient religious tradition'<sup>60</sup>

The following year, Remembrance Sunday 1920, the permanent cenotaph had been finally constructed, and the ceremony was combined with the (re)burial of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey. Great crowds followed the procession to the Abbey. The inscription on the tomb reads: "A British Warrior who fell in the Great War 1914-1918 for King and Country". In order to bring the ceremony of Remembrance Sunday to the people, it was decided from 1928 to allow the BBC to carry a live sound broadcast.

There were commemorations all over Britain, and memorials for the fallen were built in most communities in Britain after World War One in order to console the bereaved, for the government had as early as 1915 decided that the dead were not to be transported back to Britain. Since many soldiers were lost, this "caused a rupture in long-established patterns of grieving, which had traditionally taken place around the dead

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<sup>58</sup> Winter, 1995: 104

<sup>59</sup> Homberger 1976: 1429-30; Inglis, 1993: 7-31

<sup>60</sup> King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism of Politics of Remembrance*, 1998: 20-21

body and the grave”.<sup>61</sup> As Inglis points out, the British needed war memorials as all their million war dead lay in foreign graves. Most families had been touched by death in war in one way or the other, and more than a million people visited the Cenotaph after 11 November in 1920.<sup>62</sup>

The Cenotaph at Whitehall, a monument for the fallen, is placed in the heart of London between Trafalgar Square at the one end and the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey at the other end. This may indeed be called the *national spine* of British history. Trafalgar Square, named after Lord Nelson’s naval victory and, with the 56 meter tall Column in honour of the Admiral, is a symbol of Britain’s claim to rule the sea. Whitehall has been the site for governmental buildings since the establishment of the offices of Whitehall Palace and of Henry VIII’s court in the 1530s. The Houses of Parliament, the present version completed in 1860, have been the centre of British politics for several centuries. Westminster Abbey, finally, is the resting place for the Unknown Soldier who was brought from Flanders in 1920. The Abbey, site of coronations and other ceremonies of national significance, is moreover replete with memorials and tombs of the heroes of the nation and of famous British subjects, such as Newton, Livingstone, Chaucer, Jonson, Dryden and Browning. In other words, the ceremonial setting is the heart of London: Whitehall, the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey. As Winter concludes, the dead of World War One was hereby brought into history.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Moriarty, “Christian Iconography and First World War memorials”, 1991:63

<sup>62</sup> Inglis, 1993:22-23

## Participants

The ceremony taking place at the Cenotaph in Whitehall in London, consists of the following important elements: (a) rallying of units round the Cenotaph before the ceremony starts. These units make up the parade which terminates the ceremony; (b) procession of official representatives; (c) the two minutes' silence<sup>64</sup>, the Last Post and the Reveille; (d) placing wreaths of poppies at the Cenotaph by officials of the State; (e) the service led by the Bishop of London; (f) depositing of wreaths by the participants of the parade. Appropriate music is performed during different stages of the ceremony.<sup>65</sup>

The units gathering round the Cenotaph in a hollow square before the actual ceremony starts, include representatives from, inter alia, the Royal Air Force, the Royal Navy, the Territorial Army, the Household Cavalry, the King's Troops Royal Artillery, the Horse Guards, the Scots Guards, the Royal Gurkha rifles, the Royal Logistics, the Merchant Navy, the Civilian Services (the police, the fire brigade, the ambulance and prison services), the Royal Corps (administration), the Royal Women Volunteer services and the Red Cross.

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<sup>63</sup> Winter, 1995:104

<sup>64</sup> The two minutes' silence is observed every 11 November, and also when Remembrance Sunday is commemorated on another date.

<sup>65</sup> This presentation is based on participant observation and the BBC Broadcast of Remembrance Sunday and the ceremony at the Cenotaph, Whitehall in London. 11 November, 2001-2003. Other sources include: The Lord Chancellor's Department, Remembrance Sunday, <http://www.lcd.gov.uk/constitution/cenotaph/remsun.htm>. The Cenotaph ceremony was arranged 1921-23 by a Cabinet Committee, presided over by the Foreign Secretary. The Home Office took over this responsibility in 1924, an arrangement that lasted until 2001, when it passed to the Lord Chancellor's Department. Lord Chancellor's Department, "Remembrance Sunday", Constitutional Policy Division, 2003

The ceremony commences with *Rule Britannia*, followed by the musical entertainment of different massed-bands. Traditional pieces are performed: the *Mistral Boy*, the *Isle of Beauty*, *David of the White Rock*, *Oft in the Stilly Night*, the *Flowers of the Forest that Withered Away* and *Nimrod* from Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. Elgar's piece (representing 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanticism) is given a central role. As the procession of official representatives approach the Cenotaph, they are accompanied by John Arkwright's *Supreme Sacrifice*. Headed by a boys' church choir and the Bishop of London, carrying the insignia of a cross and a crucifix of poppies, the procession includes representatives of the state: the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers, Opposition party leaders, the Leader of the House of Commons, the members of the Cabinet, representatives from the Ulster Unionists for Northern Ireland, the Welsh National Party and the Scottish National Party; representatives of the military: Air Force, Army, Navy, and of the Merchant Services; the High Commissioners of the Commonwealth; representatives of the different faith communities of Britain: the Unitarian Churches, the Salvation Army, the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, the Jewish, the Hindu and the Buddhist communities.<sup>66</sup> Finally, representatives of the Monarchy: the Queen, escorted by the Duke of Edinburgh, the Prince of Wales, the Princess Royal, the Duke of York and the Duke of Kent.

The Royal party arrives at the Cenotaph just before the two minutes' silence at 11 a.m. The silence is marked by a salute when all movement comes to a halt. As Big Ben strikes 11 a.m., it reminds of the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh

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<sup>66</sup> It was not until recently that some of the faith communities were included in the procession (e.g. representatives of the Hindus and Buddhists), but as people of these world religions sacrificed their lives

month when the guns were silenced and Armistice came into force in 1918. The two minutes' silence is closed by another salute, and trumpeters positioned around the Cenotaph then play a fanfare in order to mark its significance. The silence is, undoubtedly, the moment charged with most emotion during Remembrance Sunday.<sup>67</sup>

The silence is followed by the Last Post, sounded by buglers of the Royal Marines, and the Reveille. With the Last Post, the Unknown Soldier is committed to earth, and the Reveille calls him to awaken. This ceremony has clear Christian references to the promise of resurrection and it is of utmost importance to the British military and to the public as it identifies the Unknown Soldier at the core of the nation in terms of his sacrifice for the community.

After the two minutes' silence and the procedures described above, *Beethoven's Funeral March* starts in order to accompany the process of placing wreaths at the Cenotaph. The Queen lays a wreath on behalf of the nation, which is dedicated to all who have suffered and died in war, and she bows as a mark of respect. The other members of the Royal Family, also laying wreaths, follow the Queen. After the Royal Family, it is the turn of the Prime Minister, the leaders of the opposition, the representatives of the Ulster Unionists, the Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties, to place their wreaths at the monument. The idea is that all the mourning nations within

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in the wars it was considered appropriate that they should take part.

<sup>67</sup> As expressed by the Prime Minister Tony Blair: "It is important that we take some time each year to reflect for a moment on the ultimate sacrifice made on our behalf by all those who have lost their lives in warfare. 11th November provides us with that opportunity to remember the great courage they displayed and the contribution they made to provide us with the freedoms we enjoy today. They must never be forgotten and we honour their memory by keeping the Two Minutes Silence." Royal British Legion,



Britain should be represented at the Cenotaph. After the politicians it is time for the High Commissioners on behalf of the Commonwealth volunteers, for the Commanders of the Royal Army, the Royal Navy, the Royal Air Force, and for the Commanders of the Merchant Fleet to place wreaths at the foot of the monument. These representatives place the last official wreaths at the Cenotaph, and the ceremony continues with an 'out-door' service of prayer delivered by the Bishop of London, combining patriotic and religious feelings and ideals.<sup>68</sup> After the short service follow the old Psalm (*O God, Our Help in Ages Past*) and the Lord's Prayer. The Service closes with a blessing for the masses of spectators and participants around Whitehall, Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square – as if to emphasise that the Bishop's blessing also encompasses the living, tied with bonds of gratitude to the dead.

The general participants of the procession who have been standing round the Cenotaph, prepared for the parade, follow to place their wreaths at the Cenotaph. They are called to attention with the national anthem, *God Save the Queen*, sung by all. After the national anthem the official representatives, including the Monarch and her family, retire to the Foreign Office. The president of the Royal British Legion<sup>69</sup> and

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Press Release, "Silence Throughout the Land, Sea and Air"/ "The Prime Minister's Message" [[www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)], 8 Nov, 2003

<sup>68</sup> The Bishop of London states: "Almighty God, grant we beseech thee, that we who here honour those who died in the service of their country and the crown, may be so inspired by their spirit of love and fortitude that we, forgetting all selfish and unworthy motifs, live all by your glory and to the service of mankind through Jesus Christ our Lord... Teach us to give and not to count the costs, to fight and not to heed the wounds ... to labour and to not to ask for any reward through Jesus Christ our Lord."

<sup>69</sup> The British Legion is the main custodian of remembrance today, and it organises Remembrance Services in every town on the British Isles as well as the great parade at the Cenotaph. It also organises pilgrimages to war memorials outside Britain. The British Legion, today the largest charity in Britain, formed in 1921 and started to sell the so-called 'Flanders poppies' in order to raise funds for victims of war: ex-Servicemen and their dependants. In 1921 it sold 8 million poppies, and by 1926 the number had gone up to 30 million See Homberger, 1976: 1429-30; Inglis, 1993: 7-31 The red poppy is still worn by large numbers of the population in the weeks before Armistice Day, and has become the symbol of the

representatives of the Legion (organisers of the parade) start the parade by placing wreaths of the British Legion at the foot of the Cenotaph. Music by Jeremiah Clarke (*Trumpet Voluntary* originally known as *The Prince of Denmark's March* and often erroneously attributed to Purcell) marks the pace. All the parading units march, by tradition, six abreast, and when passing the monument they salute their fallen comrades. The red poppies of the wreaths – a dramatic sight against the white Cenotaph – and the poppies on the jackets of all participants, explicitly emphasise unity and community between the dead, fallen for their nation, and the living, feeling for their nation. A large number of people (10 to 13,000) participate in this parade from Whitehall towards Parliament Square, accompanied by marching music and massed-bands. The organisation is stately and carried out with great efficiency.

A large number of spectators follow the ceremony. As stated by the BBC commentator David Dimbleby: “It is the feeling of duty and of respect, and [the hopes] to rekindle the unique spirit of comradeship fostered by war and hardship, that make the vast numbers of people turn up to commemorate Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph.”<sup>70</sup>

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Legion itself. The Poppy as a popular sign of remembrance was originally inspired by McCrae's poem *In the Flanders Fields*, written on the battlefield of the Flanders, 3 May 1918: *In Flanders Fields the poppies blow, between the crosses, row on row... If ye break faith with us who die, we shall not sleep, though poppies grow in Flanders fields.* The Poppy Organisation Official Website: [www.poppy.org.uk](http://www.poppy.org.uk). <http://212.53.90.171/media/downloads/poem.jpg>

<sup>70</sup> BBC, Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph, 10 November, 2001

## Related Remembrance Ceremonies

The ceremonial activities before the actual ceremony at the Cenotaph are also part of the commemorations on Remembrance Sunday. Earlier in the morning, the official representatives of the British State (the Royal Family, the political leaders, the Cabinet, leaders of the Church of England, the British military), as well as the participants of the march, attend various remembrance services in churches all over London. Similar remembrance services also take place all over Britain, and function as *national* manifestations of mourning. These Church Services also include an ‘Act of Remembrance’<sup>71</sup>, the two minutes’ silence, the Lord’s Prayer and the National Anthem. The two minutes’ silence and a comparatively ‘peaceful’ replacement of the National Anthem (see Chapter Five) finish the religious commemoration within a secular and national context.

## Symbols in the Ceremony

The Cenotaph ceremony is a commemorative and solemn event rather than a celebratory occasion, as in the French case. The Union Jack and the National Anthem figure as prominent symbols in the ceremony, but here in particular in relation to the Unknown Soldier. The three flags hanging from the Cenotaph are there specifically to identify the fallen: St. George’s Cross refers to those dead for England, the Union Jack

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<sup>71</sup> The ‘Act of Remembrance’ reads as follows: “Let us remember before God, and commend to his sure keeping: those who have died for their country in war; those whom we knew, and whose memory we treasure; and all who have lived and died in the service of mankind. They shall grow not old as we that are left to grow old: Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them. (All repeat: We will remember them). “The special Remembrance Service ritual that was commended for general use in 1968, had been produced by the Archbishops of Canterbury, York and Wales, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and the Moderator

to those fallen for Britain in general, and the Commonwealth flag, displaying the Union Jack in the canton to soldiers of the Commonwealth nations.

Besides the usual national symbols we have in the British case another potent symbol of the nation to deal with, namely the Unknown Soldier. Reverence for those fallen for their country, connected to religious and patriotic feelings, constituted a general background for the cult of the Unknown Soldier at the end of World War One. The mere way in which he was chosen, the pomp with which he was brought back to Britain (and managed there), the care with which his final resting-place was chosen, testify to his symbolic significance and potency, and point forward to the cult that would be dedicated to him as a symbol of all the fallen soldiers. Mosse describes this process:

The return and burial of the Unknown Soldier was accompanied by a riot of symbolism, for all the symbols present in the design of military cemeteries, and in the mythology which surrounded the fallen, were compressed into one ceremony – indeed, into one symbol. This now became the focus not only of Armistice Day, but of various other national ceremonies as well [...] During the war, several Englishmen had put forward the idea of constructing a Tomb for an Unknown Soldier, and when he was finally exhumed and selected in 1920, once again the emphasis was placed on symbolic action. The bodies were collected from the most important battlefields like Ypres and the Somme, and the one to be buried in London was selected not by a wounded soldier of the rank and file but by a high-ranking officer. The Unknown Soldier was transported over the channel by the French destroyer *Verdun*, so that this battle was included by name in the ritual. The coffin itself was made of British oak from a tree at the Royal palace at Hampton Court (a palace with many historical associations). Together with a trench helmet and a khaki belt, a Crusader's sword was placed in the coffin. The Unknown Soldier was brought to the Arc de Triomphe and the Cenotaph, situated in the middle of Whitehall, a broad avenue, was unveiled.<sup>72</sup>

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of the Free Church Federal Council. The service was updated in 1984. See *Service for Remembrance Sunday*, 1984; "Remembrance Sunday". <http://www.oremus.org>

<sup>72</sup> Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. 1990: 94-95

#### 4.3.4 Unification Day in Germany: a Counter-Case

The last case study in this chapter will investigate the history of German national celebrations, and has been included as a counter-case for analytical purposes. German history is one of discontinuity and rupture, making the understanding of 'German-ness', as expressed through national celebrations, a most complicated issue. The present national day in Germany, Unification Day (3 October), was established as late as 1990, and chiefly from above, a mode which makes the role of the elites visible in the process. In order to provide a more complete picture of the complexity of German national identity, we need to provide a brief account of the main national celebration during the following periods: (a) before World War One; (b) the Weimar Republic; (c) the Nazi era; and (d) post World War Two. As will be demonstrated the issue of a 'national day' has given the various governments considerable problems. Germany may therefore be viewed as an analytical counter case or even a 'failed' case of identity-creation, where continuous attempts to try to create a popular national day, and thus to reinforce national identity, failed.

#### **The Anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig**

The first celebration in Germany with references to what was to become a 'German' nation was held in memory of the Battle of Leipzig (16-19 October 1813) and of the War of Liberation,<sup>73</sup> a decisive defeat for France, which constituted the end of French

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<sup>73</sup> It is worth noting that the celebrations in memory of the Battle of Leipzig (19 October) coincided in time, more or less, with the celebrations of the 'beginning' of the Reformation, which started, symbolically, when Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses on the Gate of the Castle Church in Wittenberg on 31 October 1517. These two historical events were celebrated on the same day (19 October). Professor Schulze, Director German Historical Institute London (GHIL), Interview, 2002

power in Germany and Poland. This first celebration took place in 1814 when nationalist forces declared the day of the battle “the significant event of all Germans”.<sup>74</sup>

The celebrations actually started in the evening before 19 October, when they culminated in the lighting of bonfires - from Stralsund to Trieste and from Memel to Luxembourg. While the bonfires were burning at midnight, the Day in honour of the Battle was ‘rung in’ all over Germany. The celebrations continued on 19 October with a religious thanksgiving service, followed by processions, sporting events and related festive activities.

The Battle of Leipzig was understood as a celebration of freedom. It was commemorated throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and revived anti-French feelings and opposition. Although these celebrations were important for several generations (in particular for university students and their unions) the Day of the Battle of Leipzig was never recognised officially and it did not survive as it did not engage or include all socio-political and religious groupings in a divided Germany. At this time, and after 1871, the unchallenged pre-national annual festivity was the Birthday of the Kaiser, celebrated with a parade in his honour, until the disintegration of the monarchy and the formation of the Weimar Republic which tried to establish its own national ceremony.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ernst Moritz Arndt wrote a programme for the 19 October celebrations, *To celebrate the Battle of Leipzig* (1814). Arndt was a prose writer, poet, and above all a nationalist who took part in the process of national awakening in Germany in the Napoleonic era. See also Alfred G. Pundt, *Arndt and the Nationalist Awakening in Germany* (1935). Referred to by Mosse, 1990

<sup>75</sup> Hattenauer, *German Symbols*, 1990:137; Schulze, Director GHIL, Interview, 2002; Zimmer, *Forging the Swiss Nation, 1760-1939: popular memory, patriotic invention, and competing conceptions of nationhood*. 1999

## The Day of Sedan

The German Empire, replacing the North German Confederation (1867-1871), was formed after the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), in which the Battle of Sedan was the most decisive event.<sup>76</sup> Thus, another conclusive defeat of the French army resulted in the Unification of Germany and in celebrations of what was to become known as *Sedan Tag* (2 September). The Day of Sedan was celebrated for the first time in 1873, when proud declarations were made, such as that of the local government of Rhein-Westphalia:

The hand of the living God has visibly and forcefully interfered in history through the event of the 2 September, and it will be easiest on this particular day of commemoration to remind the German people what great things the Lord has done for us.<sup>77</sup>

The Day of Sedan, like The Day of the Battle of Leipzig, was never an officially recognised national day for similar reasons. Nevertheless, *Sedan Tag* came to constitute more than an 'unofficial' day of the German State: it was on this particular day the Kaiser chose to uncover the Column of Triumph, the *Siegessäule* in Berlin (and opened the military academy in Lichtenfelde).

The Day of Sedan involved the army, state authorities, schools, and voluntary organisations, all participating in great parades and processions throughout Germany. Sporting events and entertainment were provided, and political speeches (by right-wing politicians) were delivered at a central location.<sup>78</sup> The veterans of the war, together with

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<sup>76</sup> The Battle of Sedan took place on 1 September 1870 at the French border fortress of Sedan on the Meuse River, between 120,000 French troops and more than 200,000 German troops. The Emperor Napoleon III surrendered and was taken prisoner by the German Army on 2 September. See: Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory 1917-1918*, 1997; Hattenauer, 1990

<sup>77</sup> Hattenauer, 1990:142

<sup>78</sup> Confino, 1997:40-46

the university students, played a significant role in the parades, and the latter especially were described as the 'backbone' of the celebrations.<sup>79</sup>

The program of the Sedan Day celebration was a conscious attempt to integrate the spatial and historical continuum of the locality with the time-bounded, historical event of the German unification. It aspired to unite the historically commemorated event with the immemorial past of the locality. Places that represented the ancients, tradition, and character of a town – church, town hall, cemetery – became part of the new celebration. Celebrants literally walked from one symbolic site to another in order to create a tangible continuity between the old town and the new holiday, that is, the empire. [...] The main ceremony of Sedan Day that connected the community directly with the war of 1870-71 was the commemoration of the fallen soldiers at the foot of war monuments. Although ceremonies at war monuments had been part of national celebrations before 1871, and monuments were not new as national symbols, in Sedan Day they created a space to place the national unification in a local setting.<sup>80</sup>

However, Sedan Day did not have the intended effect of unifying the various fractions of German society. The holiday pitted 'Kleindeutsche' against 'Grossdeutsche', pro-Prussians against anti-Prussians, rich against poor, and also, as we shall see Catholics against Protestants.<sup>81</sup> In short, Sedan Day was a conservative celebration of a military victory by the bourgeoisie of central Germany. On these grounds it was a practice that did not go unchallenged, as became clear on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1895. In a speech at the royal banquet, the Kaiser Wilhelm II attacked the Social Democrats in Germany, describing them as "that group of people, who are not worthy of calling themselves Germans"<sup>82</sup>. This statement had been provoked by socialist interruptions during the celebrations, in protest against the involvement of reactionary forces, and in particular against the participation of the army. The highlighted tension had also made the

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<sup>79</sup> The students marched as representatives of different Student Unions in ceremonial dress bearing the heraldic arms of the University and with swords. These swords were not for decoration only: students from different Universities fought each other at least four times a year in order to illustrate their bravery and readiness to die for the fatherland. This is the reason why many academics of the time ended up with deep scars over their faces. Schulze, Director GHIL, Interview, 2002

<sup>80</sup> Confino, 1997:42-43

<sup>81</sup> Confino, 1997:55

<sup>82</sup> Hattenauer, 1990: 143



German Socialists send an official telegram of brotherhood (1 September) to their comrades in France.

The celebrations of the Battle of Sedan also attracted religious protests. The Catholic Church referred to Sedan Day as a day of ‘Saint Sedan’ – the name equalling a battle sanctified and for this reason ‘a Satan’s celebration’, and perceived it as a day of national discord. As early as 1874, on behalf of the Catholic Church, the Bishop of Mainz prohibited his priests from taking an active part in the celebrations; a prayer for German unity, however, was included in the morning service on 2 September.

The Day in honour of Sedan was, in other words, a day of division rather than unity, and still less enthusiasm was expressed for the celebrations at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was then acknowledged that the dates of great military victories are not suitable national holidays since “the anniversary of every national holiday will tear open the old but continuously bleeding wounds”.<sup>83</sup> However, by calling for celebrations of Sedan Day, the conservatives tried to make sense of German history and take ‘symbolic possession’ over the present<sup>84</sup>. A national committee for German National Holidays was founded in Berlin in 1896. As a private organisation of the nationalist bourgeoisie, it sought to protect and promote the interests of national celebrations, whereas the socialists worked to get 1 May (Workers’ Day) recognised as a national day. This day became an official public holiday in Germany in 1919, but by no means did it develop into a day of national unity. In 1920, however, it was clearly a Day of the

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<sup>83</sup> Hattenauer, 1990:145

<sup>84</sup> Confino, 1997:61

Workers and of their fight for better conditions. The issue of a German national day was an area of considerable political debates (between socialists and conservatives, republicans and monarchists) and alternative days of national commemoration were continuously being suggested.<sup>85</sup>

### **Constitution Day in the Weimar Republic**

Constitution Day (11 August) was an attempt of the *Reichkabinett* of the Weimar Republic to create a generally accepted national day. However, Constitution Day did not manage to unify a divided Germany mainly because the Republic itself was unsuccessful in gaining the support of the people. The celebration remained a concern only for the elites, although a day in honour of the Constitution was enforced in all the German States. An additional negative factor was that the Day of the Constitution, designed to be the chief Republican festival, had been established in August when German schools and institutions were on vacation. It is interesting to note that not even the authorities were completely convinced:

The Weimar Republic, too, attempted to institute a festival to celebrate its founding as a way of uniting Germany's divisive elements. 'Constitution Day' (August 11) was supposed to induce loyalty to the new Republic. But even the official publication, published as a directive for the celebrations, displays an astounding ambivalence. Joy over the constitution is mixed with bitterness for the suffering of the German people. Nothing in the world is perfect, states the pamphlet, all is in flux, even the constitution."<sup>86</sup>

Besides the introduction of a national day, the Weimar Republic also formalized the use of a German national anthem. The music had been composed by Haydn as early as 1797, and had been in use for more than a century in the anthem of Imperial Austria,<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> For a more specific account of the debate on national days in Germany during this time see e.g. Hattenhauer, 1981: 47-153

<sup>86</sup> Mosse, 1975:124

<sup>87</sup> The tune to *Deutschlandlied* appeared first in Haydn's Emperor Quartet Opus 76, No. 3

whereas the text was written later in 1848 (by von Fallersleben) with specific references to the German nation.<sup>88</sup> The anthem *Deutschland, Deutschland Über Alles* (see Chapter Five) was officially adopted on Constitution Day 11 August in 1922 during the celebrations in Parliament. The Weimar Republic also re-adopted the original tricolour of black-red-gold of 1848.

Constitution Day never managed to interest the crowds, and was in severe competition with earlier established celebrations connected with the battle of Sedan; and when supporters of Constitution Day spoke up, as did Thomas Mann in 1923, the German press was in upheaval, reacting against him.<sup>89</sup>

### **The Cult of War Dead during the Inter-War Period**

If Constitution Day was not a success among the people the cult of the war dead, mourned through memorials and mass cemeteries, came fully alive after World War One, and must be mentioned in a context of national rituals. The Tombs and Cenotaphs constructed for the Unknown Soldiers have already been mentioned in the cases of France and Britain, as appropriate responses to the great losses of the war. Germans, however, who together with the Russians lost most people in the war, did not directly create a national place of mourning. The twenty war tombs of unidentified soldiers at the *Tannenberg Memorial* in Germany, built in 1927, focused on General von

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<sup>88</sup> The first verse reads: Germany, Germany above all, above everything in the world, when always for protection and defence brothers stand together. From the Maas to the Memel, from the Etsch to the Belt, Germany, Germany above all, above all in the world. *Original text*: Deutschland, Deutschland über alles, Über alles in der Welt, Wenn es stets zu Schutz und Trutze, Brüderlich zusammenhält, Von der Maas bis an die Memel, Von der Etsch bis an den Belt, Deutschland, Deutschland über alles, Über alles in der Welt. "Das Lied der Deutschen", <http://ingeb.org/Lieder/deutschl.html>

<sup>89</sup> Schulze, GHIL, Interview. 2002

Hindenburg's victory over Russia rather than on the unknown soldiers and their sacrifices.<sup>90</sup>

Although not comparable to Britain's Cenotaph and France's Arc de Triomphe as the national focus, a neoclassical guardhouse was designated for the Unknown Soldier in Berlin in 1931. The guardhouse became a centre for national worship for it was easily accessible to the crowds, even if on a lesser scale than in Britain and France. A heightened German national consciousness was also displayed by the construction of a variety of memorials, tombs and monuments erected in war cemeteries and related to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The war cemeteries were distinguished from civilian cemeteries through their uniformity and through centralized monuments and mass graves that "left no doubt that the war dead were not only comrades but above all members of the nation rather than individuals".<sup>91</sup> The discussion of the function of such war tombs will be continued in Chapter Five.

### **National Days during the Third Reich**

What Adolf Hitler called 'momentous times' was expressed by the official celebrations during the Nazi regime in the cycle of state-celebrations and 'national holidays': National Labour Day (1 May), Heroes' Memorial Day *Heldendenktag* (16 March), Thanksgiving for the Harvest *Erntedanktag* (early October), a day that during the Weimar Republic had been known as *Volkstrauertag* (Day of Mourning). The annual circle of Nazi celebrations, memorial days and festivals also included: Day of the Reich

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<sup>90</sup> Inglis, 1993: 7-31

<sup>91</sup> Mosse, 1990: 85

(30 January), in honour of the Nazi takeover in 1933,<sup>92</sup> Hitler's Birthday (20 April), Memorial Day of the Putsch of 1923 (9 November), and the NSDAP annual party rallies *Parteitage* (one week in August/September).<sup>93</sup>

The Day of the Reich (30 January) was an encompassing celebration, with a torchlit procession marching towards the *Reichskanzlei*. The Day of the Führer or Hitler's Birthday (20 April), and in particular his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, was also an important celebration during the Nazi regime. Although the day was only declared a public holiday for his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1939, 20 April had been honoured in Germany since 1936. In order to commemorate Hitler's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, special music was commissioned. This made an essential contribution to the Nazi attempt to create an image of possessing redemptive power as well as having a sacred mission,<sup>94</sup> referring especially to the hymn *Führer, we call to you!*, which was sung by all participants as a personal anthem to the Führer, as a symbol of the new German nation.

Führer, we call to you!  
Führer, take the flag  
To the clouds and the sun,  
To freedom and to glory.  
For the flag is our sacred relic.  
Führer, lead us right on.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Lidtke illustrates the national mood during this festivity by the songs chosen, all along the lines of faith, loyalty, sacrifice and willingness to die, as in *Wir tragen das Vaterland in unser'n Herzen* [We carry the Fatherland in our hearts]. Lidtke, "Songs and Nazis: Political Music and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Germany", 1982

<sup>93</sup> Another day of importance for the National Socialist Party was the Day of the Party in honour of the declaration of the Nazi party programme (24 February).

<sup>94</sup> *Unser Jahrhundert im Bild*, 1969:442-443, 450-451

<sup>95</sup> The hymn was composed and written by Herbert Böhme and Erich Lauer. The German text reads: *Führer, wir rufen dich an! Führer, trage die Fahne hinan Zu Wolken und Sonne Zu Freiheit und Ruhm, Denn die Fahne is unser Heiligtum, Führer, schreite voran!* Lidtke, "Songs and Nazis: Political Music and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Germany". 1982:196

Memorial Day (9 November) held in honour of the fallen martyrs of the abortive Putsch of 1923, was also a significant NSDAP commemoration. On this solemn occasion Hitler, with the 'honorary' party members, marched to the *Feldherrn Halle* in Munich under the flag of 1923 - the *Blutfahne* - that served as the rallying point during the attempt to start an insurrection against the Weimar Republic (8–9 November). The Blood Flag had become a Nazi relic and was taken from its sanctuary only twice a year – on 9 November and for the annual party rallies. Consequently the Blood Flag was the focus of the *Nürnberger Parteitage*, the massive Nazi Party rallies held in 1923, 1927, and 1929, and annually from 1933 through 1938 in Nürnberg (Nuremberg), Bavaria.<sup>96</sup> The first grand-scale rally was held in 1929 and featured many of the elements that were to become characteristic for future rallies. Lengthy orations delivered by Adolf Hitler and other Nazi leaders, Wagnerian overtures, stirring martial songs, thousands of banners, giant versions of the national flag decorating official buildings, marches, torchlit processions, human swastika formations, bonfires and fireworks, are examples of features integral to the rallies. The climax was reached with a solemn consecration of the colours, in which new national flags, as a kind of inauguration rite, were made to touch the 'Blood Banner', a tattered standard said to have been drenched in the blood of Hitler's supporters in the abortive Beer Hall Putsch of 1923.<sup>97</sup>

The Nürnberg Rallies were held in August and September and lasted for a week. They drew hundreds of thousands of Party members and spectators, and played an essential

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<sup>96</sup> Lidtke, "Songs and Nazis: Political Music and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Germany", 1982

<sup>97</sup> See e.g. Bullock, *Hitler, a Study in Tyranny*, 1962; Calvocoressi & Wint, *Total War: The Causes and Courses of the Second World War*, 1989; Friedrich, *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s*, 1972; Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, 1985

role in the context of 'communal experience' during the Nazi era. Such a rally constituted a national week filled with nationalistic indulgence and worship, during which all elements of the Nazi rituals were present. Lidtke fully illustrates the extent of the rallies and the experience of total absorption by them in the quotation below:

Führer adulation, disciplined cadres, political theatre, demagogic speechmaking, marching masses with bands and bugle corps playing endlessly. Everywhere there was singing. Without music the pace would have slowed and the euphoria would have muted. But the pace did not slacken. Music set the tone. At one rally, fifty thousand men from units of the Labour Service, spades over their shoulders, sang seventy-five different songs as they marched past Hitler's stand at his hotel, the Deutscher Hof. At another, an equal number from the youth organizations would sing 'Wir sind nicht Bürger, Bauern, Arbeitsmann' ('We are not burghers, farmers, or working men'), and at a night time rally, amid torches and floodlights, thousands and thousands of storm troopers would bellow 'Wir halten zusammen, ob lebend, ob tot, mag kommen was immer da wolle' ('We stand together, whether living or dead, come what may'). For the ritual consecration of new regiments, the Führer had directed that at each party rally the very first of the Nazi songs 'Storm, Storm, Storm, Storm, Storm' by Dietrich Eckart should be played and sung... To claim again a sacred endorsement of all that had happened during a week of Nazi political theatre and idolization of Hitler, thousands of men from the Labour Service closed the ceremonies singing: 'Gott, segne die Arbeit und unser Beginnen. Gott, segne den Führer und diese Zeit'. ('God Bless the work and our enterprise. God Bless the Führer and these times.') The communal song had served its vital function in the ultimately communal experience of German Nazis.<sup>98</sup>

### **The People's Uprising on 17 June 1953**

A devastated Germany did not recognise any official celebrations after World War Two, and the only day that provided a national focus in the post-war Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was the commemoration of the people's uprising in East Berlin in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1953. In the GDR, on the other hand, 1 May and 7 October (the founding of the GDR) were imposed as state celebrations in 1950.

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<sup>98</sup> Lidtke, "Songs and Nazis: Political Music and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Germany", 1982: 198-199

In the Federal Republic of Germany the commemorations of 17 June started immediately after the events of 1953.

The citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany would probably have been without a national day for a long time, had not the workers' uprising on 17 June in 1953, taken place in the competing DDR [...] While Soviet tanks were still on the streets of East Berlin, the German Parliament in BRD convened and commemorated the dead, who had died in the struggle for freedom and national unity.<sup>99</sup>

The uprising in East Germany in 1953 started as a protest against the high productivity norms imposed by the Soviet regime and, more generally against the lack of freedom.

<sup>100</sup> On 17 June prisons were stormed and prisoners liberated, houses belonging to the Communist Party were burnt down, and the police threw away their uniforms and joined the demonstrating masses. Moreover, the flag with the communist symbols was lowered at the Brandenburg Gate (*Brandenburger Tor*) under fire from the Soviet tanks. Besides the 25,000 East Germans that were arrested, condemned to harsh sentences of imprisonment or high fines, a minimum of 125 people were executed, among these 41 Soviet soldiers who refused to obey orders and shoot at the Germans. The '17 June Committee' was established in West Germany with the aim to protect the memory of this event, and it is still active in organising national commemorations and the march through Brandenburg Gate in honour of the people who died there<sup>101</sup>.

Konrad Adenauer, in his capacity as Chancellor, tried to challenge 17 June as the National Day for FRG, suggesting a Day of Sovereignty (8 May) in honour of the end

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<sup>99</sup> Hattenhauer, 1990: 168-169

<sup>100</sup> Kappler & Reichart, *Facts about Germany*, Government Publication, 1996:38

<sup>101</sup> The inscription on the Memorial Stone at Holzkreuz in Berlin-Zehlendorf reads as follows: "For the brave and courageous fighters for humanity and for truth and freedom 17 June 1953". A memorial also recognises the Soviet officers and soldiers that were killed because of their refusal to execute the East German insurgents: "To the Russian officers and soldiers that died because they refused to shoot the



of the occupation in 1955 (when FRG also became a member of NATO). His suggestion was met with forceful resistance among the Social Democrats and the trade unions, wishing to adopt 1 May as the national day. Willy Brandt, much later, in 1971, also made his opinion clear when he stated that 17 June was an ‘absurdity’ as a national day of German unity: “the explosive events of 16 and 17 June have deprived German Unification of its last chance”<sup>102</sup>. An opinion poll in 1984, however, concluded that over 80 per cent of the citizens in West Germany accepted 17 June as the national holiday.<sup>103</sup>

## Unification Day

The official National Day in contemporary Germany is Unification Day or *Tag der Deutschen Einheit* (3 October). It was established after the Unification of West and East Germany in 1990. The vision of unity revealed itself in East Germany, most significantly before unification, as the motto of the demonstrating masses changed from a protest against dictatorship - *Wir Sind das Volk* - to a protest for a unified nation - *Deutschland - Einig Vaterland*.<sup>104</sup> In 1990 thousands of people came together and celebrated unification on both sides of the Brandenburg Gate,<sup>105</sup> which after this demonstration became *the* symbol of German Unity.

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freedom fighters 17 June”. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the uprising in East Berlin was celebrated at the Brandenburg Gate in 2003.

<sup>102</sup> Hattenauer, 1990:174

<sup>103</sup> Hattenauer, 1990:174

<sup>104</sup> Chronologie der deutsch-deutschen Geschichte

[http://www.swr.de/special/deutsche\\_einheit/chronik/index.html](http://www.swr.de/special/deutsche_einheit/chronik/index.html)

<sup>105</sup> The Brandenburg Gate, which has played the role of an arch of triumph, is the only remaining town gate of Berlin, located at the western end of the avenue Unter den Linden. The gate was built in 1788-91 by Carl G. Langhans after the model of the Propylaea in Athens. The famous "Quadriga of Victory," a statue of a chariot drawn by four horses, was placed on top of the gate in 1794. From 1961 to 1989 the Berlin Wall shut off access to the gate to both East and West Germans. The Brandenburg Gate was

On Unification Day there is so far no mass participation, and public support is to a great extent absent. In order to try to involve the whole of the Federal Republic, the central and official celebrations are not exclusively concentrated in Berlin as the capital, but are located in a different federal state every year. Unification Day, from this perspective, is more of a celebration of the diversity of the sixteen federal states or *länder*<sup>106</sup>.

### Ceremonial Setting<sup>107</sup>

Unification Day is celebrated in two official events: an ecumenical mass in the morning and a ceremony, with political undertones, in the evening. The official part of the celebrations is, by and large, *for* and *with* the state elites, as special invitations are needed for the ecumenical mass as well for the political celebration in the evening. Both events are broadcast on German television, otherwise it is not possible for ordinary Germans to take a direct part in them. However, other festive activities such as a Citizens' Festival and a Youth and Children Festival are also arranged during 2 - 4 October.

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reopened on Dec. 22, 1989, in the course of the reunification of East and West. See: Official Website on Deutsche Einheit, 2001. "Unification Day 2001", <http://www.deutsche-einheit-2001.de/frame.htm>

<sup>106</sup> The federal states of Germany are: Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Berlin, Brandenburg, Bremen, Hamburg, Hesse, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein and Thuringia.

<sup>107</sup> Although the presentation is based on Unification Day in 2001, the celebrations 2002-2004 have also been into consideration. In 2001, the official celebrations of Unification Day took place in Mainz, the capital of Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz). Mainz had approximately 200,000 visitors for the two days' celebrations. Unification Day in 2003 interested slightly larger crowds, as it coincided with the anniversary of the uprisings in East Berlin in 1953. ZDF1. TV Broadcast of the Ecumenical Mass in Mainz Cathedral on Unification Day. 3 October 2001; ZDF1. TV Broadcast. Festakt Tag der Deutschen Einheit. 3 October 2001

The morning service took place in Mainz Cathedral (in 2001) and set the tone for the Day by emphasising ‘the blessing and the gift of unity’<sup>108</sup>. Important elements of the service concerned the wish for a unified German Church, for political cooperation and unification, and for tolerance and peaceful coexistence between all the different peoples within Germany, the underlying idea being that ‘difference means enrichment’. Musically, Bach, a symbol of German culture and religious life, interpreted by the Bach Choir and Bach Orchestra of Mainz, dominated the service.<sup>109</sup> In this way, the ecumenical start of the day stressed religious as well as political unity within a most solemn ceremonial context concluding with a stirring musical grand finale.

In the evening, a broadcast political ceremony (Festakt) was held in a significant place<sup>110</sup> for 1,600 especially invited guests, and it lasted for 1 ½ hours. The main events of the evening were the speeches delivered by three keynote speakers: the State Governor of Rheinland-Pfalz, the Speaker of Parliament, and the Guest of Honour, the President of Poland (Alexsander Kwaśniewski). The speeches were delivered before an audience consisting of the political and socio-cultural elite of Germany and Rheinland-Pfalz including the President and the Chancellor of the Republic, members of the government, and all State Governors of the Federal Republic.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Neander, “Eine Mischung aus Karneval und Katholikentag”. 2001

<sup>109</sup> Examples of the anthems/music played are: *Nun jauchzt dem Herren, alle Welt; Unsere Väter hofften auf dich* by J. Brahms; *Der Geist hilft unsrer Schwachheit auf* and *Der aber die Herzen forschet* by J. S. Bach; *Nun danket (ihr) alle Gott*.

<sup>110</sup> The political ceremony was in 2001 held in the *Rheingoldhalle* in Mainz. The *Rheingoldhalle* is named after the first part of the Ring Circle by Wagner: *Das Rheingold, Die Walküre, Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung*.

<sup>111</sup> In 2001, the State Governor of Rheinland-Pfalz was Kurt Beck, the Speaker of Parliament Wolfgang Thierse, and the Chancellor of the Republic Gerhard Schröder.

The State Governor, emphasised the importance of a united fatherland for ‘das Deutsche Volk’, and thanked Helmut Kohl, and others, “die uns diesen Glücksfall der Geschichte beschert haben” (who presented us with this lucky historical chance). The Speaker of Parliament with a focus as much European as national, stressed the advantage for Eastern Germany of becoming part of the European Union as a result of unification, a fortune not yet shared by other nations in Central and Eastern Europe. He also argued that a European Union enlargement would provide endless opportunities for the former East Germany and would bring the troubled economy out of its present difficulties.<sup>112</sup>

Musical entertainment was also provided within the ceremonial frame, by a Choir and a Symphony orchestra (‘Young Germans’). It included important national pieces, such as parts of the opera *Die Loreley* (Overture & Main Scene) by Max Bruch, the anthem *Verleih uns Frieden Gnädiglich* (Give us Peace), and music by Mendelssohn among others. The ceremony came to a close with the audience standing while singing the present German national anthem *Deutschlandlied*, which, precisely, stresses unity.

Unity and rights and freedom for the German fatherland.  
Let us strive for it together, brotherly with heart and hand.  
Unity and rights and freedom are the pledge of good fortune.  
Flower in the light of this good fortune, flower German fatherland.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> The main speech of the evening was that delivered by the Guest of Honour -- President Aleksander Kwaśniewski. Naturally, inviting the Polish President was for historical reasons a most significant choice. In his opening address, Kwaśniewski greeted his hosts by stating that “the Poles are thinking of the unified Germany with hope and sympathy”. Acknowledging the past, filled with war, conflict and ideological division, the President focused instead on the future of integration and European unity, hoping for a Europe where national identities would coexist in tolerance with multicultural elements. Kwaśniewski concluded by emphasising the essential role played by Germany in promoting European integration. See <http://www.deutsche-einheit-2001.de/frame.htm>

<sup>113</sup> In German the words read as follows: Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit für das deutsche Vaterland! Danach laßt uns alle streben Brüderlich mit Herz und Hand! Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit Sind des Glückes Unterpfand. Blüh' im Glanze dieses Glückes, Blühe, deutsches Vaterland. Reed & Bristow, 1993

This contemporary national anthem, a modified version of the original *Deutschland Über Alles*, is constituted, as seen above, by the third verse of the original. It was re-adopted in West Germany in 1952, and became also the national anthem of a united Germany after the reunification of 1990. Many critical voices have been raised in favour of banning the anthem altogether, due to its links with Nazi Germany. The subject of national anthems and music in ceremonies will be raised in more depth in Chapter Five.

## Participation

The celebrations of Unification Day went on for two days, with the aim of creating a street-party on the streets of Mainz.<sup>114</sup> The ‘street-party’ and the Citizens’ Festival included different ‘stations’ where all the German states were represented and where the spectators and participants could sample beer from Bayern etc. All the federal states contributed with some kind of ‘speciality’ (ranging from food to technological innovations) chosen to represent their state. The Child and Youth Festival<sup>115</sup> was also incorporated in the celebrations and so activities targeting a younger audience, ran parallel to the other celebrations.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Due to the terror attacks of 11 September 2001, many events within the festival had been cancelled and strict security measures had been taken.

<sup>115</sup> See Kinder & Jugend Fest, 2-3 October, 2001, Liebfrauenplatz, Mainz. Official Website on Deutsche Einheit, <http://www.deutsche-einheit-2001.de/frame.htm>

<sup>116</sup> Unification Day 2001 coincided with the celebration of the International Year for Volunteer Work (*Das Internationale Jahr der Freiwilligen*), so the national celebrations came to exhibit work done by volunteers all over Germany. The concept of ‘Ehrenamt’, voluntary or honorary position/work, was in this way highlighted as part of the national festivities. Hundreds of projects, of a voluntary nature, also to be viewed on the official website ‘Unification Day 2001’, were displayed in a temporary construction, and integrated as part of the celebrations of Unification Day. Some of these voluntary projects had been running for several years and provided extensive links to websites, whereas others were in the early stage of development. Voluntary work was not integrated to this extent in the celebrations of Unification Day in Berlin 2002.

It must be noted that the National Day in Germany was in all respects extremely well organised. On a national level several TV programmes relating to political and cultural Unification were broadcast in the week preceding 3 October. An extensive website provided detailed information and many links to related websites encouraging the user to learn more generally about German heritage, politics, and more specifically about domestic and foreign relations in the period 1945-2002: with as many as 50 links on the theme of 'German Unity'.<sup>117</sup>

### Symbols in the Ceremony

However, German Unification Day is a rather de-nationalized event and there is little information to provide as regards the use and display of national symbols such as flags and emblems. In the *Rheingoldhalle* (in Mainz), there was one symbolic manifestation of nationhood on 3 October: the German national anthem was sung to close the official ceremony in the evening. One single national flag - albeit a large one - had been placed outside the Rheingoldhalle for the festivities. No other national flags or symbols were officially on display. The lack of national symbols and ceremonies on Unification Day can be defined as the lack of assertion of a German national identity.

## 4.4 Concluding Remarks

The main aims of this chapter have been to explore how national ceremonies figure in the process of nation building, with regard to Europe as a whole, and with reference to

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<sup>117</sup> Official Website on Deutsche Einheit, [http://www.swr.de/special/deutsche\\_einheit/links/index.html](http://www.swr.de/special/deutsche_einheit/links/index.html)

four case studies. Continuing the classification of the European symbolic regimes in terms of 'old', 'modern' and new, it may be noted that national days, as a rule, comprise a later stratum of the nation compared to national flags. We will return to this discussion in Chapter Six.

The adoption of national days, much like that of national flags, expresses particular notions of nationhood. With regard to European national days, they are mainly celebrated in honour of the founding event of the nation. Their appearance and continuity have been a function of the political situation in the countries presented. The national days of Europe have continued to adapt to political change and express new notions of nationhood. Moreover, during occupations national days have often been outlawed, and domineering powers often enforced or introduced new days to celebrate.

The main point to emphasise, in this context, is that national days are annually *repeated* 'myth-symbol complexes', that for this reason provide anchorage and raise awareness of belonging to a distinct community. As has been demonstrated in the case studies of France, Norway and Britain, symbols in ceremonies are of special importance in highlighting the nation in various ways. This is a matter to be returned to in Chapter Five.

In modern societies, the values and the distinctiveness of the nation are maintained through national ceremonies with their use of national symbols. We may say that a form of moral integration takes place. In France it was with the new Republic and the

ideals of 1789 that the nation was founded. The military nature of 14 July can only be understood by taking the conflict-ridden French past into account. In Norway, too, the struggles against oppression from foreign domination have in different periods helped to establish the values and identity of the Norwegian community as celebrated on Constitution Day. In Britain, where the cult of the war dead commenced after World War One, it is also evident that conflicts and wars constitute a way in which the members of the community achieve and give expression to their virtues, in particular through the many sacrifices by the citizens/nationals for their country. The role of the German nation as a moral community, on the other hand, has been contested and will be discussed in following chapter.



## CHAPTER 5

### UNDERSTANDING NATIONAL CEREMONIES

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In this chapter the functions and the inner meanings of the national day celebrations and commemorations will be highlighted, as opposed to their official meanings described in the previous chapter. We will see how practices and symbols related to national ceremonies justify the existence of the state and provide anchorage for the nation. The vital link in this context is the intrinsic one between collective identities and collective ceremonies. Pursuing this idea it can be claimed that national ceremonies play a key role in the making of and the maintaining of nations and national identities.

This chapter will be pursued in the light of George Mosse's extensive works *The Nationalization of the Masses* (1975), *Fallen Soldiers* (1990), and *Confronting the Nation* (1993). Eric Hobsbawm, Anthony D. Smith and Benedict Anderson have also developed significant frameworks for the study on national ceremonies.<sup>1</sup>

In order to explain the function of national ceremonies the different ceremonial types described in Chapter Four will be examined; these are the military national

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<sup>1</sup> More generally, the works of Spillman, *Nation & Commemoration* (1997), Gillis *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (1994), Kapferer, *Legends of people, myths of state* (1988) have been considered. Anthropological sources on 'symbolic action' include Nunn ("Symbolism in a Ritual Context: Aspects of Symbolic Action", 1973). Influential works relating to the case studies ought to be mentioned. As regards France some illuminating works within the edited volumes by Nora (1996) on 'national memory' are highly interesting, see e.g. Amalvi, ('Bastille Day: From *Dies Irae* to Holiday'). Other related works are those of Gildea (*The Past in French History*, 1994) and Ozouf (*Festivals and the French Revolution*, 1988). Sources on Britain that have been consulted include: King (*Memorials of the Great War in Britain: The Symbolism of Politics of Remembrance*, 1998), Winter (*Sites of memory, sites of mourning*, 1995), Moriarty ("Christian Iconography and First World War Memorials", 1991), Homberger ("The Story of the Cenotaph", 1976), and Inglis ("Entombing Unknown Soldiers, 1993). The works by Eriksen (*Ethnicity and*

day of France (Bastille Day), the commemoration in honour of the British war dead (Remembrance Sunday), and the popular celebration of Norwegian Independence (Constitution Day). References will be made to the recently established Unification Day in Germany and to the other European national days examined in the previous chapter.<sup>2</sup> The ceremonies will be examined under the following headings: Nationalism - a Civic Religion; Ceremonial Content; Ceremonial Choreography (design, style and participation); and Ceremonial Symbolism.

## 5.1 Nationalism as a Civic Religion

As the heading suggests it is necessary to investigate the 'sacred' and 'religious' forms of nationalism and the reason why national ceremonies continue to appeal to members of the community. The power of ceremonies is connected to this 'sacred' core and their function is to sustain the group and revive group identity. As Durkheim reminds us:

There can be no society, which does not feel the need of upholding and reaffirming at regular intervals the collective sentiments and the collective ideas, which make its unity and its personality. Now this moral remaking cannot be achieved except by the means of reunions, assemblies and meetings where the individuals, being closely united to one another, reaffirm in common their common sentiments; hence come ceremonies which do not differ from regular religious ceremonies, either in their object, the results which they produce, or the processes employed to attain these results.<sup>3</sup>

In other words, collective ceremonies or rituals are important for the formation of all national groups. The quotation above, points to the similarity in the form of worship between national and religious ceremonies. Thus the 'eternal' dimension of religion, mentioned in Chapter One, is present in the form and style of worship of

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*Nationalism*, 2002) and Mykland ("The 17<sup>th</sup> of May: A historical date and a day of national celebrations", 1996) have been helpful in the case of Norway.

<sup>2</sup> As previously pointed out, these National Days have been chosen for closer examination as they represent different ceremonial types and different categories in terms of different periods of nation-state formation (old, intermediate and new nation-states).

<sup>3</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. 1976:427

the nation. In a secularised context, we can observe contemporary ritually active national communities, which from a ceremonial point of view are similar to religious communities.

This analysis has been undertaken in the light of Mosse's<sup>4</sup> work in which nationalism, as a new type and style of politics expressing unity, became a secularised religion.<sup>5</sup> In this perspective modern nationalism, with its extensive use of symbols and ceremonies, forms an essential part of a 'secular' religion, in which self-representation is as crucial as religious symbolism was earlier. In his study on Germany Mosse explains how the rise of nationalism and of mass politics transformed the crowd into a coherent political force, and stimulated the people's worship of the nation by means of myths and symbols referring to a nostalgic past.

He writes:

This religion relied upon a variety of myths and symbols which were based on the longing to escape from the consequences of industrialization [...] The myths, which formed the basis of the new national consciousness whether of a Germanic or classical past, stood outside the present flow of history. They were meant to make the world whole again and to restore a sense of community to the fragmented nation.<sup>6</sup>

Establishing links to history and traditions was a concrete way of making the present comprehensible, of organising time, of coping with the speed of modernity and preserving order, and, as the ultimate goal, of creating a national consciousness.

After World War One this was particularly important for a defeated Germany. As

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<sup>4</sup> Mosse, 1975; See also Mosse. 1993

<sup>5</sup> Mosse writes: "The worship of the people thus became the worship of the nation, and the new politics sought to express this unity through the creation of a political style which became, in reality, a secularised religion." (Mosse. 1975: 2) It should here be stressed that the concept of 'secular' religion has been challenged by Weber who argued that nationalism was a surrogate religion, i.e. a substitute for religion.

<sup>6</sup> Mosse, 1975:6

argued by Mosse<sup>7</sup>, symbols, the objectification of popular myths, give people their identity.

The concept of 'civil religion', akin to the analysis of Mosse, has been further developed by Robert Bellah<sup>8</sup>. Very briefly, he points out that modern and multiethnic societies with alternative or competing worldviews and faith communities, characteristically are held together by an overarching 'civil religion'. It is the 'civil religion' that generates a widespread loyalty to the nation and to the state. Bellah's line of argument has its starting-point in 'Americanism' and the more 'general' God, i.e. America's God, who serves as a uniting force for the diverse origins of the American people. In terms of acting out this 'civil religion' through civil ceremonies in a modern sense, we may make a link to the days of Remembrance celebrated around Europe. These events, as well as national days, national jubilees, national sport occasions, royal funerals or coronations, such as that of Queen Elizabeth in 1953, are occasions where moral values are affirmed and citizens show their devotion to the nation. People renew their vows to the nation by taking part in the ceremonies, which are in principle acts of communion or national worship. The Christian Communion, symbolised by drinking wine and eating bread, is a manifestation of being part of a Christian community and of adhering to the same faith. Similarly, participation in national ceremonies is a way of reaffirming one's membership in the nation. It is for this reason that all nations have a national day, or an occasion of national significance when people are clearly brought together and social structures reinforced.

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<sup>7</sup> Mosse, 1975:7

<sup>8</sup> Bellah, *Varieties of Religion*. 1980

Moving on to our case-studies, and applying this line of argumentation to Revolutionary France, we can clearly see the encompassing impact that nationalism brought about. With it appeared new symbols and new rituals commemorating the nation, connected also to festivals marked by mass participation. As expressed by Hutchinson:

With this transformation came a new iconography and a set of rituals. The emblems of monarchical rule sanctified by religious rites and arcane aristocratic codes were replaced by *a national flag* (the tricolour), a stirring *national anthem* (the Marseillaise), and great open-air festivals of public dedication (oath-taking) to and *commemoration of the nation*, which were marked by mass participation. *A new political religion was being formed in which the people, now deified, worshipped themselves.*<sup>9</sup>

The cult of the Revolution took symbolic charge in the domain of religion. Goddesses of Reason replaced the Virgin Mary in churches, which were transformed into temples of the nation, most notably the Cathedral of Notre Dame which became the Temple of Reason and the Panthéon with the inscription ‘Aux grands hommes la patrie reconnaissante’.

According to Durkheim, during the French Revolution - the starting-point of modern nationalism and the modern nation-state - people experienced a feeling that can be described as ‘religious’, since the same mental process is also at the root of religious feeling. He supports this by citing the examples of the Crusaders, who believed that God was present in their midst when they went out to conquer the Holy Land, and of Joan of Arc, who believed that she was obeying celestial voices.<sup>10</sup>

“during the first years of the French Revolution ... under the influence of general enthusiasm, things purely laical by nature were transformed by public opinion into sacred things these were the Fatherland, Liberty, Reason. A religion tended to become established which had its dogmas, symbols, altars and feasts... The cause being gone,

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<sup>9</sup> Hutchinson, *Modern Nationalism*. 1994:39 Emphasis added

<sup>10</sup> Durkheim, *Selected Writings: Emile Durkheim*. Giddens (ed.), 1972:231

the effect could not remain. But this experiment, though short-lived, keeps all its sociological interest. It remains true that in one determined case we have seen society and its essential ideas become, directly and with no transfiguration of any sort, the object of a veritable cult.”<sup>11</sup>

Peter Alter, too, argues that the ancestral roots of nationalism derive from the French Revolution. This becomes evident when we consider the creation of the French ‘state’<sup>12</sup>, and, more specifically, its form and ideology. The selection of national symbols, such as the flag, anthem and national holiday constituted an essential part of this creation. Alter writes: “It is obvious until today that the symbolic foundation of the nation-state follows a general pattern laid down very early in the history of modern nationalism”.<sup>13</sup> So, the creation of the modern French nation-state is directly tied to the production of national symbols. However, as regards the production of symbols, generally, it begins as soon as communities start to form. Alter is right in pointing to the symbolic pattern that was laid down very early – in some cases centuries before the French Revolution – although national symbols were officially sanctioned for the first time by the state (and unofficially by its citizens) with the emergence of popular sovereignty and modern nation-states.

In other words, the creation of a national day for France was intended as a means of achieving social stability and unity in the new Republic. Victor Hugo coined the expression: ‘To overthrow bastilles is to deliver humanity’.<sup>14</sup> A similar sentiment of a new ‘moral federation’ being created was expressed in an address by Gambetta

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<sup>11</sup> Durkheim, 1976:214. The cult of the French revolution, its symbolism and festivals, is a research topic in itself and has been investigated by Ozouf in *Festivals and the French Revolution* (1988).

<sup>12</sup> The term ‘state’ is used within the context of exploring the formation of European nation-states primarily as political organisations, involving the convocation of a national assembly, the drawing up of a national constitution but also the choice of official symbols. Alter, *Nationalism*, 1994: 66-90

<sup>13</sup> Alter, 1994: 72

<sup>14</sup> Amalvi, “Bastille Day: From Dies Irae to Holiday”. 1996: 116-159 (Quotation 1996:121) Amalvi maintains that the capture of the Bastille in 1789, at the time, was argued by Republicans to be the

where he said that the storming of the Bastille was the Day when “we received our New Testament”<sup>15</sup>, a statement challenging the Catholic community and pointing to the nation as the new and secular provider of community:

The ‘special day’ was not to be simply “time regained” but a shared experience in the present, carefully planned and arranged.[...] The choice of date was definitely important: good summer weather naturally encouraged outdoor activities such as parades, banquets, games, sporting events, dances, and fireworks... Various forms of public celebration (including dedications of statues, parades, torchlight processions, and commemorations of all sorts) allowed the Republic to challenge the almost exclusive control that the Church had enjoyed over public space since 1815; some of the shared sacred character of religious celebration was carried over into the secular public domain.<sup>16</sup>

An illuminating example of how the sacred character was carried over into the now secular public sphere can be found in the republicanised *Pater Noster* as recited, for example at the Republican banquet at Mont (Loir-et-Cher) on 14 July 1880: “Our father, who art in the nation’s Élysée, glory be thy name. May Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity reign through thee on earth, and may the will of our forefathers of 1789, that man should be his own master, be done. Give us this day our Liberty, and forgive us our sins against the Republic. Give us the strength to defend the democratic Trinity and deliver us from the evil that we may involuntarily do to it. Amen.”<sup>17</sup> There could not be a better illustration of how religious ceremonies were appropriated to induce a ‘sacred’ feeling to national events.

In short, the French Revolution marked the transition to mass-celebration, and the cult of genius and heroism connected with it became synonymous with the cult of the people, which continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is within this context that the

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result of a *long* revolutionary process starting as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the movement for communal emancipation, and continuing with Étienne Marcel’s uprising in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>15</sup> Amalvi, 1996:122

<sup>16</sup> Amalvi, 1996:131-132

nation emerged as a 'sacred communion' into which the people was invited through the mass-celebrations.<sup>18</sup>

Ceremonies are most powerful when national and religious themes are combined – in terms of symbolism and meaning – as they are when the ceremonies refer to death and sacrifice. These two themes are central in religion as well as in nationalism. In the British case, the Cult of the Fallen and War Dead became a powerful combination of nationalism, sacrifice, death, past and future. The notions of sacrifice, morale, deed and eternity are all emphasised on Remembrance Sunday in Britain, when death is portrayed as noble and dignified.

Originally, there was no reason to expect that the events and memorials which constituted public reflection on the Great War would be so overwhelmingly concerned with death. The royal proclamation which instituted the two minutes' silence specified that it was to 'afford an opportunity' to 'perpetuate the memory of the Great Deliverance' as well as 'of those who laid down their lives to achieve it'. The committee which made the arrangements for the Armistice Day ceremony at the Whitehall Cenotaph in 1921 intended to set a tone to be copied throughout the country, and insisted in its recommendations that 'Armistice Day is not a day of national grief'. The committee's chairman, Lord Curzon, was convinced that 'in this and subsequent years the 11<sup>th</sup> November would not be a day of mourning but would be the commemoration of a great day in the country's history [...] In many people's minds, however, the outcome of the war could not be separated from the deaths which had occurred.'<sup>19</sup>

Many saw in the Cenotaph, taking the role of a civic crucifix, a message of resurrection<sup>20</sup>, and as the march passed through Whitehall and the Cenotaph towards Westminster Abbey and the Unknown Soldier the ceremonies further connected the nation with the church in a higher degree. These religious associations are necessary for Wilkinson: "Without the biblical imagery purveyed through the Church, the

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<sup>17</sup> Amalvi, 1996:134

<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*. 2003

<sup>19</sup> King, *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*. 1998: 216-217

<sup>20</sup> Inglis, "Entombing Unknown Soldiers: From London and Paris to Baghdad", 1993



men at the front and those at home would have had hardly any ‘containers’ at all to help them through those four years of constant death and bereavement.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus, it was easier to justify the war in the absence of all the dead. In this context, religious iconography helped to direct the attention towards a spiritual level and sanctify their sacrifices.<sup>22</sup> The fact that the commemoration became a large-scale event benefited its moral undertones. To be present on such an occasion was the duty of the citizen and enforced the belief that the war had been inevitable.<sup>23</sup>

Despite Lord Curzon’s prediction that Remembrance Sunday would become a great day of pride in British history rather than a day of grief, it still constitutes a grand funeral where the nation represents the family in mourning, and when for one day the nations of Britain are united. In the symbolism of the ceremony religious elements and elements of sacrifice are constantly fused with secular and national ones.

The music (the massed bands play Beethoven’s Funeral March, Elgar’s *Nimrod* and Purcell’s *Dido’s Lament*), the silent and solemn behaviour of the participants, the dress (official funeral clothing), the Cenotaph and the activities connected to it (the wreaths, the two minutes silence remembering the great sacrifice), all these components manifest the sacredness of this secular funeral. We may go a step further and compare the respect paid to the war dead at the Cenotaph, with the respect paid in church to Christ’s sacrifice at the Cross. The sacrifice theme is

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<sup>21</sup> Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War*. 1978: 196

<sup>22</sup> Moriarty, “Christian Iconography and First World War Memorials”, 1991: 73

focused in the concluding words of the religious service, provided by the Bishop of London: *Teach us to give and not to count the costs, to fight and not to heed the wounds [...], to labour and not to ask for any reward.* John Arkwright's anthem *Supreme Sacrifice* is played afterwards, containing the passage where the Church blesses the nation against its enemies quoted in Chapter Four.<sup>24</sup> The poppy, worn by the participants and spectators, is above all a secular symbol of mourning and worship. We may say that it constitutes a symbol of unity: by wearing it nationals renew their vows to the nation and to each other.

As demonstrated by Smith<sup>25</sup>, national themes of 'destiny through sacrifice', 'glory in self-sacrifice' and 'transcending death' form a sacred foundation of national identities.

Grief, like hope and defiance, may start in the privacy of individuals' hearts, but its overt expression, outside the immediate family, becomes a form of public commemoration, a generalized language of mourning and celebration whose sentiments and messages are standard, if not universal, beneath the variety of national forms.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, mass sacrifice and national morale are important ingredients in the national 'salvation drama'. This is nothing new; national communities had a substantial bank of pre-existing motifs of 'sacrifice' and 'martyrdom' in pre-nationalist commemorations which served as a source of inspiration. It has been of utmost importance that imagery of self-sacrifice and its commemoration in Judaism, Christianity and Islam have helped the nations form their own myths of salvation and ideals of sanctity and heroism through the sacrifices of members of the

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<sup>23</sup> King, 1998: 225

<sup>24</sup> See also Moriarty, 1991:68

<sup>25</sup> Smith, 2003: 218-253

<sup>26</sup> Smith, 2003: 218

community. Commemorations taking place at a significant place and at a significant time, were central to religious practice.

As pointed out by Cicero centuries before national communities were formed: “*No man would accept to die for his fatherland without a strong hope for immortality.*”<sup>27</sup>

The sole aim of commemorative rites and ceremonies, according to Durkheim<sup>28</sup>, is to awaken certain ideas and sentiments meant to attach the present to the past or the individual to the collectivity. They are of particular significance in this context, since these are celebrated by the group in order that its members remain faithful to values of the past and to the vision of the collectivity.<sup>29</sup> A commemorative rite “consists solely in recollecting the past and, in a way, making it present by means of veritable dramatic representation”,<sup>30</sup> and its essence and social function have found their basis in the mythology of the collectivity:

... the mythology of a group is the system of beliefs common to the group. The traditions whose memory it perpetuates express the way in which society represents man and the world; it is a moral system and a cosmology as well as a history. So the rite serves and can serve only to *sustain* the vitality of these beliefs, to keep them from being effaced from memory and, in sum, to *revivify the most essential elements of the collective consciousness*. Through it, the group periodically *renews the sentiment which it has of itself and of its unity*; at the same time, individuals are strengthened in their social natures. The glorious souvenirs which are made to live again before their eyes, and with which they feel that they have a kinship, give them a feeling of strength and confidence: *a man is surer of his faith when he sees to how distant a past it goes back and what great things it has inspired*. This is the characteristic of the ceremony which makes it instructive.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Cicero, *Devant la mort, Disputationes tusculanae I*, 1996. “[...] personne n'accepterait de mourir pour sa patrie sans un puissant espoir d'immortalité !”. English translation Dr. Bernt Elgenius.

<sup>28</sup> Durkheim, 1976: 370-388

<sup>29</sup> Durkheim, 1976: 378

<sup>30</sup> Durkheim, 1976: 372

<sup>31</sup> Durkheim, 1976: 375. Emphasis added

Norway is also a good example of the capacity of national ceremonies to form and maintain nations and national identities. The search for a Norwegian culture is an important component of the Norwegian nationalism connected with the 19<sup>th</sup> century struggle for independence. Here we must again look at the importance of Constitution Day in terms of symbolic action, symbols of unity and political ideals. The importance of Norway's Constitution Day is, moreover, illuminating for a discussion of nationalism as a secular religion with secular symbols celebrating political ideals.

Eriksen claims that the process of searching for an 'authentic Norwegian culture' was undertaken by the bourgeoisie who identified suitable elements of the so-called 'peasants' culture' and introduced them as 'authentic expressions of Norwegian-ness'.<sup>32</sup>

Folk costumes, painted floral patterns (*rosemaling*), traditional music and peasant food became national symbols even to people who had not grown up with such customs. Actually it was the city dwellers, not the peasants, who decided that reified aspects of peasants' culture should be the 'national culture'. A national heroic history was established.<sup>33</sup>

The main purpose was to establish once again the uniqueness and distinctiveness of Norwegian culture. This would, in turn, identify the Norwegians as a separate people and justify the political struggle for a Norwegian state. The desire for uniqueness, concretely demonstrated through appropriate symbols, made clear distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. At the same time the unity of different layers of the Norwegian population was stressed:

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<sup>32</sup> Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*. 2002: 100-101

<sup>33</sup> Eriksen, 2002: 100-101

This national symbolism was efficient in raising ethnic boundaries vis-à-vis Swedes and Danes, and simultaneously it emphasised that urban and rural Norwegians belonged to the same culture and had shared political interests.<sup>34</sup>

Vernacularisation was part of this production of a potent national symbolism of national unity, in the sense that Danish, being the main written language, was replaced with New Norwegian based on Norwegian dialects. Although the first King of an independent Norway came from the royal family in Denmark, he was renamed Haakon (VII) according to the tradition of the dynasty ruling Norway before 1350. This name procedure was intended to create a legitimate connection with a Norwegian past. However, as pointed out by Eriksen, it constituted an ‘entirely fictional continuity’ with gaps of several centuries.<sup>35</sup>

Generally speaking, the selection and the usage of national symbols, such as folk costumes, designed by nationalists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century to remind people of ‘ancient’ and ‘typical’ Norwegian customs, was to a large extent politically motivated in Norway. These symbols are integrated elements of Constitution day. The nationalists, who found support among independence-hungry Norwegians of a more moderate kind, also designed the celebration of this day which has been of great importance throughout its history.<sup>36</sup> Besides being a day of private festivities, it celebrates Norway, its constitution, independence and unity. In contemporary Europe Norway’s Constitution Day is one of the most enthusiastically celebrated national events. The potent symbolism developing around it is most illuminating in a discussion about nationalism as a secular religion.

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<sup>34</sup> Eriksen, 2002: 100-101

<sup>35</sup> Eriksen, 2002: 102-103

<sup>36</sup> Eriksen, 2002: 101-102

## 5.2 Ceremonial Content: what is being commemorated?

All commemorations must by definition be social as well as political in their content, as products of co-ordinated individual and group memories. Even if the celebrations or commemorations may appear to be consensual, they are usually outcomes of long periods of struggles and conflicts,<sup>37</sup> as we have seen in the cases of France and Norway. Over time, national days began to represent the symbolic beginning or re-constitution of the nation and capture the essence of the nation formation process. The cause for the celebration chosen relates, in other words, to the historic birth of the nation-state. What nations choose to remember are representations of the 'national reality'; memories and identities are not necessarily things we think about, but tools we think with.

### 5.2.1 Typology of National Days

As stated in Chapter Four, in Europe we find that the ceremonies form a pattern, and two main types of ceremonial foci can be distinguished in terms of national personifications (type 1) and political events (type 2).

**Table 5-1: National Personifications Type 1**

<b>SAINTS</b>	<b>MONARCHS</b>	<b>HEROES</b>
Hungary (St. Stephen) Ireland (St. Patrick) England (St. George) Scotland (St. Andrew) Wales (St. David)	Hungary (King Stephen) Netherlands (Queen's Day)	Spain (Columbus) Portugal (Luis Vaz de Camões) Britain (War-dead)

<sup>37</sup> Gillis, *Commemoration: The Politics of National Identity*. 1994: 5

Saints, monarchs and other prominent national personifications representing significant historical periods are the categories in which the first type of celebrations can be placed. While we may say that every nation commemorates its distinctive glorious past, prime examples of nations that celebrate a specific Golden Age are Spain and Portugal. The national day of Spain is celebrated in honour of Columbus' discovery of the New World; and Portugal Day is a tribute to the national poet Luis Vaz de Camões who provided an epic description of Portuguese history and Vasco da Gama's discovery of the seaway to India (1497-98). That Britain remembers its war dead is another example of how the sacrifices of the nation are sanctified. In an extension the Fallen Soldier represents all heroic sacrifices and ultimately the heroism of the nation.

**Table 5-2: Political Events Type 2**

### POLITICAL EVENTS

<b>REPUBLIC (R), UNION (U) CONFEDERATION (C)</b>	<b>SOVEREIGNTY (S) CONSTITUTION (c)</b>	<b>LIBERATION (L) INDEPENDENCE (I)</b>
France (1789, R) Czech Republic (1918, R) Iceland (1944, R) Italy (1946, R)  Romania (1918, U) Germany (1990, U)  Switzerland (1291, C)	Latvia (1918, S) Austria (1955, S) Russia (1990, S) Croatia (1991, S)  Poland (1791, c) Sweden (1809, c) Norway (1814, c) Denmark (1849, c) Slovak Republic (1992, c)	Bulgaria (1878, L)  Greece (1821, I) Belgium (1831, I) Finland (1917, I) Estonia (1918, I) Lithuania (1918, I) Slovenia (1991, I)

The European nations honour mainly significant political events. These concern particularly unification and the forming of republics, statehood received by the declaration of sovereignty, the signing of constitutions or constitutional reform,

independence or liberation. Although it may seem a fine difference between the formation of a republic, sovereignty and of independence, the distinction is important since remembering the founding of a new republic, the constitution or sovereignty are celebrations of 'us', whereas independence is a commemoration primarily of liberation *from* 'others'.

Naturally we find overlapping categories as indicated in the tables above. To mention a few cases, St. Stephen's Day in Hungary honours King Stephen the first Hungarian Monarch and the founder of the Hungarian State. It is also noteworthy for example that Independence Day in Belgium is commemorated on the day of constitutional reform, symbolised by the allegiance to the Constitution sworn by the first Belgian monarch in 1831. Sweden officially celebrates the constitutional reform of 1809, on the same date that Gustav Vasa I, who played a major role in the 16<sup>th</sup> century nation formation process, was elected King (in 1523). The Swedish and the Austrian national days are also examples of national days originating from Days in honour of the Flag. The celebrations in Finland and Estonia of Independence Day also commemorate the founding of the Republic.

If the types of national days are linked to the symbolic regimes, the trend shows – as may be expected – that the 'old' national days commemorate national personifications or a golden age, whereas the celebrations of political events are by definition 'modern' or 'new'. In comparison to national flags, another immediate observation is that the national day is a later stratum of the nation. The implications of this are discussed in Chapter Six.



A further, and more specific, point regarding the ceremonial content is relevant to the case-studies. Nora argues that memory sites emerge if, at certain times and in certain places, there is a *perceived* or *constructed* break with the past.<sup>38</sup> This is not an exaggerated statement. The French need to commemorate arose directly out of an ideological desire to break with the past. Moreover, it was essential to construct a new age, and in this context rituals and symbols would help to reinforce and maintain the new social structure. There were objections from various social groups: the conservatives continued to remember the birth and death dates of the Bourbons, whereas the peasantry were reluctant to exchange their local traditions for the new national memory until World War One. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Day of Wrath has gradually become a day that belongs to the entire nation.<sup>39</sup> 'Bastille Day' is a good example of a festival illustrating how society re-creates itself.

In the struggle for independence against the dominance of Denmark and Sweden, Constitution Day (17 May) – symbolising the content as well as the enactment of the Constitution - became the symbol of Norway's breach with the past; it provided Norway with a channel to express its uniqueness and distinctiveness after the establishment of the Constitution, which was essential to the identity-formation process. The institutionalisation of celebrations of the Norwegian constitution had its origin in the rise of Norwegian nationalism. The 17 May celebration was a desire to create a tradition and to demonstrate the existence of a distinct national culture and above all a manifestation of the desire for independence from Sweden.

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<sup>38</sup> Nora in Gillis, 1994:8

<sup>39</sup> Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, 1988; Amalvi, 1996

The British national day has been analysed in terms of the product of the enormous loss of lives due to the industrialisation of war. Modern British memory had its starting-points a) in the sense of a break with the traditional representation of the past which now started to acknowledge the people; and b) in an awareness of the conflicting representations of the past connected to the different social classes and to the efforts of each of them to make its own version the basis of national identity. The central feature of the British national day is the Unknown Soldier. Commemorating the war dead started with the 'democratic' kind of national consciousness which arose after World War One and the age of mass politics.<sup>40</sup> The time after 1914 was ground-breaking in commemorative terms as for the first time dead soldiers were recognised as 'citizens meriting honour'; traditionally, war monuments had commemorated kings, emperors, generals and admirals.<sup>41</sup> The discontent in the army and industrial unrest were factors that were to have a great impact on the establishment of Remembrance Sunday. The Remembrance Ceremony around the Cenotaph helped, in this context, to transform the victory parade, a moment of high politics, into a solemn occasion where millions could contemplate the reality of death in war and at the same reinforce patriotic feelings. Mosse, among others, argues that "the government feared that Bolshevism might gain a foothold in Britain. Therefore, it was felt that everything possible should be done to use the victory to work up patriotic feeling."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Mosse, 1990: 95-96

<sup>41</sup> The commemoration around an empty coffin was originally an Athenian tradition during the wars against Sparta. This tradition later was also used in the Roman Empire. Inglis, 1993: 7-31

<sup>42</sup> Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*. 1990: 95-96

For Smith<sup>43</sup>, the commemoration honouring the dead serves also to inspire the living and unite future generations. National identities are transmitted to and reconstituted in each generation by means of social memories, through which the ancestors are commemorated and their sacrifice celebrated. As we have seen on Armistice Day in Britain, the commemoration takes the form of a religious and military ceremony held in the presence of the Monarch. The main significance of this day is that the living are reminded of their debt to the dead and the young are taught to respect the path of their ancestors and, indirectly, the nation. Commemorations, national sites, tombs and monuments celebrate the national community and its heritage by honouring and recalling great heroes and events. In short: the living is authenticated by the dead.

Although Remembrance Sunday may have been a way to channel public discontent, it became an annual ceremony due to public demand. What is commemorated is an actual period in British history and the sacrifices of people who died. This can be contrasted to the celebrations of the legendary St George. Regarding the differences between national celebrations, it is also important to distinguish whether the national day is 'marked' in the diary only or whether it is actually celebrated. St. George's Day is a good example of a 'marked' day. We do not see any marches held in honour of St. George and his victory over the dragon. However, due to the socio-political authority of England, St. David Day in Wales and St. Andrew's Day in Scotland demonstrate an explicit effort to celebrate 'who and what we are' by having a national day of 'our' own. Thus, these national days involve a dimension

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<sup>43</sup> Smith, "Commemorating the Dead, Inspiring the Living: Maps, Memories and Moralities in the Recreation of National Identities", 1996

of protesting against English hegemony and of demonstrating that ‘we are not English’. St. David’s Day and St. Andrew’s Day, despite their legendary and religious origin, have been transformed into sources of national pride and are today celebrated with various festivities.

### **5.3 Ceremonial Choreography: Design and Participation**

We now turn from ceremonial content to ceremonial choreography, to the style and design of national day ceremonies. There are a number of significant variables to consider in terms of choreography and character, and the European national days vary to a high degree. Some national days are popular, others not, and celebrations range from speeches given by government officials in a public space to the participation of whole nations in processions, parades, carnivals and street-parties. Although there are no clear cut celebrations with the participation of only the state elites or only its citizens, it is possible to classify their main character as either official or popular celebrations. Generally speaking, in many countries the protagonists are the people, in others the elite.

### 5.3.1 Variations in Ceremonial Style

**Table 5-3: Ceremonial Varieties**

	<b>MILITARY</b>		<b>CIVILIAN</b>	
<b>ELITE (STATE)</b>	Belgium		Poland Austria Denmark Sweden Germany Slovak Republic Croatia Russia	
<b>MASS (POPULAR)</b>	Spain France Greece Bulgaria Finland Estonia Latvia Czech Republic	Britain	Ireland Hungary Scotland Wales Portugal Norway Netherlands	Switzerland Macedonia Lithuania Iceland Italy Romania

The diagram above demonstrates that the ceremonial style and design of Europe's national days vary significantly. On the one hand the state-led military celebration of Independence Day in Belgium can be compared to the popular civilian celebrations of Portugal Day or of Constitution Day in Norway. On the other hand the popular and military celebrations of Liberation Day in Bulgaria stand against the state-led national days in honour of the constitution in Denmark and in Sweden and of unification in Germany, without popular participation.

Some national days naturally fall in between these categories in terms of being mixed celebrations, that is, they are relatively popular but honoured primarily by the state, notably the case of Austria and Belgium where they are characterised by

official elements. Nations whose national days are mainly celebrated by the state do not, as a rule, commemorate historical events that in a genuine way constitute a symbol of the nation or provide a vision for the future. This seems to be the case in Denmark and Sweden, officially celebrating a constitutional reform that no one remembers any longer. Two other examples of elite-led ceremonies are Unification Day (Germany) and Russia Day with little public participation. The main reason for this in Germany can be explained by the ambivalent associations to nationhood and perhaps also to the unification. In the case of Russia, Slovakia and Croatia, it has to be taken into account that the public national holidays have been established recently and a pattern for celebrations may not yet have been formed. The Russians themselves do not celebrate any of the days (Russia Day, the Day of the Fatherland or the National Unity Day) recently established by the state elites, who in the process have abolished the anniversary of the 'Great October Socialist Revolution' as a public holiday despite polls showing that the majority of Russians were in favour of keeping it.<sup>44</sup> Victory Day (9 May), on the other hand, is still today a most popular national celebration in Russia.

As a general rule, we find that the majority of national days are popular days in which people participate. The reasons for their popularity are to be found in the main assumption of this thesis: the national day is an expression of nationhood, identity and sovereignty and constitutes an anchor in an ever-changing world. Its popularity illustrates that its prerequisite, 'the nation', is popular. The majority of

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<sup>44</sup> A poll conducted by the *Yury Levada Analytical Centre* Moscow, showed that 68 per cent of Russians were against replacing the Day of Accord and Reconciliation (7 November, the Anniversary of the October Revolution in 1917, celebrated before 1991) with the Day of National Unity (4 November). "Russians against eliminating constitution day", Russian News and Information Agency, *Ria-Novosti*, Moscow, 29 November, 2004, Correspondence 29 November, 2004

those countries whose national days are state-led have other national holidays in which participation is evident.

The usual pattern suggests that ceremonies are generally either characterised by military manifestations or by civil ceremonies with civilian participation. Military celebrations have usually been carefully orchestrated: timing and precision in marches and parades are paramount, and point to the fact that the military is the characterising element of the official ceremony. Moreover, military involvement suggests that the ceremonies are elite-led with strong state presence and assertion. However, this does not mean that national days commemorated with the military forces cannot be transformed into civilian festivities after the official ceremony, which is clearly the case in France and Britain. On account of the origin of the national days of Spain, France, Greece, Bulgaria, Belgium, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Britain and the Czech Republic, it is not surprising that the armed forces in these countries still play a role in the official celebrations. It is also noteworthy that the Spanish and Greek celebrations are both military and religious in nature as they coincide with traditional religious festivities; in Spain the Feast of the Virgin Mary (Patron Saint of Spain and of the Spanish army), and in Greece the Feast of the Annunciation.

The style in which the national day is presented depends on whether it is a matter of celebration or commemoration and on what historic event is being acknowledged. In most countries, notably in Norway, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Ireland, Lithuania and the Netherlands, the national days are associated with joyful celebrations of

nationhood. As a clear contrast, and as the main exception to this rule, we find a solemn commemoration of the war dead all over Britain on Remembrance Sunday.

To return to our cases, the national days of France, Britain and Norway vary as regards style, design and participation. With regard to differences in character these cases represent different ceremonial types (elite, mass, military, civilian). The degree of participation, both official and popular, also varies to a great extent. However, the celebrations all have long traditions and popular participation is evident.

The nature of Bastille Day is contradictory in terms of being both state-led and manifesting massive popular participation. We can contrast the official state-celebrations to the festive celebrations that take place all over France on 14 July, in cities as well as in villages, after the official celebrations and the military parade. The military character of 14 July can be understood by taking the conflict-ridden French past into account, nationally and internationally. Bastille Day is a good example, not only of the national amnesia (of forgetting the violent reality of the Revolution) but also of national formation, integration, maintenance and re-negotiation of a new future. The irony of Bastille Day is still present. Once celebrated in honour of the revolutionary formation of the Republic, when the King was guillotined, the military parade on Bastille Day can today be performed in the presence of royalty. The King of Spain, for example, recently took part as Guest of Honour.



Remembrance Sunday has the character of a national funeral where Britons are united in mourning. In a nationally divided Britain, unity is clearly displayed at the Cenotaph since all major British institutions are represented as well as the different nations of Britain. Moreover, all participants and spectators wear the *same* sign of belonging to the national family of mourners, namely the red poppy, and symbolically national vows are renewed. The poppy is a uniting symbol and can be contrasted to the different national flags displayed on all other occasions and individually representing England, Wales and Scotland. The atmosphere of a funeral is reinforced as we have seen, by the symbolic paraphernalia surrounding the Cenotaph, including also the two-minute silence, the Last Post and the Reveille, not forgetting the hundreds of wreaths. The symbolism has striking parallels to a Christian funeral and the Cenotaph provides a focus similar to that of a crucifix in a church. The act of remembering the sacrifice of the Unknown Soldier (as a symbol of all other soldiers and ultimately the nation) is comparable to the respect paid to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in Christian ceremonies.

The ceremony at the Cenotaph is clearly a mixture of military and civilian nature, although the military plays a central role. Whereas it is to a large extent elite-led in terms of organisation and design, we find strong elements of popular participation through the ceremonies of remembrance that take place all over Britain, which is extraordinary in a time of devolution and ethnic (national) revival.

The Norwegian case is rather transparent with its joyful and happy celebrations. Parades of school children with massed bands are organised throughout the country: in the capital and other cities as well as in small towns. The fact that children take

part in the parades, instead of soldiers or state representatives, makes it natural that emphasis on timing and precision is secondary. All schools take part and one might say that, with spectators included, all levels of society are involved in the celebrations. The Norwegian case is an excellent example of complete participation.

### 5.3.2 Participation and Success

We must also examine what makes a national day successful and popular. In order to be popular, the ceremonies must be accessible and perceived to be legitimate. National days need to provide a link with a living past and they need to be relevant and inclusive in order to gain voluntary support. Moreover, all ceremonies must also, to some extent, adapt with the times.

First of all a significant factor is whether the national day is a public holiday or not. As the founding Day of the nation it has been declared a public holiday in all the European countries investigated in Chapter Four, apart from Denmark and Switzerland where it is a half-day public holiday and in Britain where it is commemorated on a Sunday. Thus, the European countries have made a legal commitment to the celebrations and citizens are exempted from work. The fact that national days are declared public holidays, is of course an indication that public participation in ceremonies and festivities are state-sponsored.<sup>45</sup>

Another, lesser consideration in this context is the time of year when the national days are celebrated. Most celebrations take place in the spring, summer and autumn.

The exceptions are the celebrations in Romania (1 December), Finland (6 December), Lithuania (16 February), and Estonia (24 February). Naturally, as the exceptions indicate, the weather is not the decisive factor especially as these celebrations are of a popular nature, but the choice of national days has sometimes been influenced by the fact that warmer weather makes it more attractive for citizens to participate in out-door activities. One example is Holland where Queen Beatrix in 1980 decided to keep the date of Queen's Day on 30 April, not only in honour of her mother but also to avoid the winter weather on her own birthday in January. Popular participation in national day celebrations takes place out of doors in public places unless they are mainly celebrated by the elites in smaller ceremonies.

Thirdly, ceremonies need time and continuity to be perceived as legitimate, even if state grandeur, pomp and circumstance will further emphasise their legitimacy. A ceremony is seen as legitimate when it is based on established traditions or promotes continuity with the past. Continuity is central to mass resonance, as it has the power to unite generations in the celebrations. Therefore, national elites have to establish a living link and continuity with the past by selecting a representative national day. As we have seen in previous chapters, there have often been bitter political struggles in the process of choosing a representative national day, especially in the cases of France and Germany. After choosing the Day of Unification as the national day, the elites in Germany struggled to engage the country in celebrating a Day that is perceived as lacking continuity and legitimacy

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<sup>45</sup> The discussion of whether the national day should be a public holiday is significant. In Sweden, for example, it has been an indicator of a recent effort to popularise the national day and to standardise it as a public holiday - in line with most other European nations.

in the opinion of the people. We have also to take into account the anxious approach to national identity in Germany, due to the earlier assertions of German nationalism during World War Two.

Fourthly, participation and popular support are essential to guarantee success. Individual feelings towards the nation are not evaluated here, although a significant number of people must be involved and touched by the national day ceremony if it is to be sustained and reproduced. Thus all national days rely on collective participation. Voluntary participation is the key if a national day is to be successful.

Amalvi writes in the case of France and Bastille Day:

The voluntary participation of the populace was essential to Bastille Day's survival. From 1880s on, the majority of the French... threw themselves wholeheartedly into the day's activities, so that July 14 became a symbol, if not *the* symbol, of republican strength at the village level... French people of modest station no longer felt excluded from, and reduced to the role of mere spectators at, the nation's official celebrations as had been the case under the constitutional monarchy and the Empire. Now they were invited to become full-fledged participants. The notion that on July 14 'France celebrates itself' can be traced all the way back to 1880. The national holiday was everybody's holiday, an occasion for families, children, and the elderly. For one day the strict social hierarchy was abolished.<sup>46</sup>

The 14 July has also had periods of hardship as regards ceremonial enthusiasm. We may, for instance, identify the period 1906-1914, characterised by resistance from the extreme left who started to regard Bastille Day as the Day for the bourgeoisie. The periods during World War One and World War Two served, on the other hand, as incentives for national revival and joyful display of national identities in many European nations, as in France. In France, Britain and Norway, the world wars were periods of national revival against the enemy. The periods after 1919 and 1945 have been identified by their 'great victory parades' led by prestigious military commanders. These parades became the feature of the national day whatever the

cost. In the thirties, especially 1935-36, rivalling political left-wing fractions united against the outbreak of fascist sympathies in France. Bastille Day was then used as a means to revive the ideological basis of the Revolution.

Acts of remembrance, in particular at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris or the Cenotaph in London, faced an additional challenge in order to get voluntary support, as the vast numbers of deaths had to be presented as justified sacrifices. The ceremonies ought to be, at the same time, disciplined and wholesome experiences. As King highlights, the appeal of the commemoration was to mourn the dead but also to recognise their sacrifices and thereby acknowledge their moral achievements made possible through their deaths:

For the bereaved, idealisation of the dead might help to make sense of deaths which could not be absorbed into the normal cycle of life and its satisfactions [...] An alternative was to insist that they had died in a worthy cause, had contributed significantly to it in the process, and had even been given an opportunity for achievement which a life of peace might never have offered.<sup>47</sup>

Lloyd George and his government also had other issues to consider when planning the peace celebrations for July 1919 and concentrated on winning the favour of the public, and as noted it “was desperately considering any proposal to dampen revolutionary ardour”<sup>48</sup>. In line with the measures taken, Minister George Roberts suggested that demobilised soldiers should march through towns and cities, and that during the “period of difficulty in industrial centres [...] public opinion should be stirred up to the highest pitch”.<sup>49</sup> Thus, previous orders restricting any kind of amusements were withdrawn. In order to encourage ‘flag waving’ Austen Chamberlain suggested that “every brass band in the country should be let loose as

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<sup>46</sup> Amalvi, 1996:135

<sup>47</sup> King, 1998: 225-226

often as possible” and “everything possible should be done to work up a high patriotic feeling from the results of victory”.<sup>50</sup> Homberger concludes: “Patriotism, which was present in abundance in the streets (and which could exist side by side with deep political and economic discontent), was there to be encouraged.”<sup>51</sup>

Remembrance Sunday and Bastille Day illustrate that inter-generational participation is a key to successful ceremonies and nation-building. The celebration of nationhood in France is, however, of a more general nature, and thereby more encompassing in its associations than the British commemoration. We may ask, what will happen once the generations remembering the world wars are no longer alive? It is true that memories of the fallen in armed conflicts after World War Two have also been included in the commemoration and Remembrance Sunday has thereby been ‘updated’.

Participation across the generations on the 17 May in Norway has been crucial for national self-expression and maintenance of identity since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 17 May is truly unique due to its joyfulness and high degree of participation. Constitution Day is also a Children’s Day involving all school children in Norway, which guarantees success in terms of numbers; in this way the involvement of siblings, parents and grandparents as spectators is secured. Success is also guaranteed by the early stage from which children are encouraged to take part and they are thereby socialised into ‘loyal nationals’ and ‘good citizens’. The Norwegian national day has in fact been so successful that it is celebrated by

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<sup>48</sup> Homberger, “The Story of the Cenotaph”. 1976:1429-30

<sup>49</sup> Homberger, 1976: 1429-30

<sup>50</sup> Homberger, 1976: 1429-30

Norwegian communities outside Norway, celebrations which range from those held in London, as in Hyde Park, to those at the Norwegian School in the small village of Valle Marina, on Gran Canaria.<sup>52</sup>

In order to be successful, national ceremonies must provide access to the past, to continuity as well as stability. At the same time, however, ceremonies must adapt to their environment and to the times in order to keep their appeal. Regarding France and Norway the meaning of the national day has undergone radical changes. The celebration in France has become an inclusive day celebrating nationhood. Today, Constitution Day is a celebration of Norwegian-ness rather than of Norwegian independence or the Constitution as such. Remembrance Sunday in Britain has also adapted continuously. There are new war dead to commemorate but also new events to celebrate.<sup>53</sup> The Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002 stands as an excellent example of a festive occasion that drew the masses into the national centre, unified behind a re-invented Monarchy.

In this context consideration must also be given to Europe as a whole. As mentioned earlier, the majority of national days are mass events. However, how do we explain that some national days have not been prone to mass-participation? The main observation to make is that most of these nations (Poland, Belgium, Denmark, Slovakia, Croatia and Russia) celebrate other national holidays in which popular participation is evident. To clarify this point we may take Poland as an example

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<sup>51</sup> Homberger, 1976: 1429-30

<sup>52</sup> The Irish St. Patrick's Day has also been exported and is celebrated at many universities and student communities around Europe.

<sup>53</sup> In the American context, we have recently witnessed how national tragedy has provided a unifying focus: 11 September has become a new Day commemorating the dead.

where two national holidays, Independence Day (11 November, 1918), and the Anniversary of the Battle of Warsaw (15 August, 1920), are celebrated and in which popular participation is evident.<sup>54</sup> Another interesting case is Belgium, where Armistice Day (11 November) constitutes a day of unity.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, the Flemish community celebrates Flanders Day (11 July), in memory of the Battle of Golden Spurs in 1302 when the Flemish defeated the French, a battle considered to constitute the beginning of the Flemish nation. This is a popular day of encompassing festivities, street parties, fireworks and a concert is given on *Grande Place* in Brussels. The French community, likewise, celebrates Walloon Day (*Fête de la Communauté française*, 27 September), the anniversary of the victory of the Walloon army over the Dutch invaders in 1830. Festivities last the whole of September.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> A national focus is provided by the Queen's Birthday (16 April) in Denmark as was also the case with Liberation Day (4 May) during the decades after World War Two. As mentioned earlier some national days have been institutionalized so recently that a pattern may not yet have been established. This may be the case in Slovakia, Croatia and Russia which have national holidays in which public participation is displayed. Slovakia has two popular celebrations: Victory Day (8 May, 1945) and the National Slovak Uprising Day (29 August, 1945). Croatia celebrates Independence Day (8 October) and the Day of Victory and Patriotic Gratitude (5 August), and Russia commemorates Victory Day (9 May).

<sup>55</sup> The Day of the Dynasty (15 January) is also celebrated, and to some extent, Europe Day (9 May) has provided a somewhat rivalling focus in Brussels, and constitutes an official flag day in Belgium. Site officiel du Parlement de la Communauté française, "Fête de la Communauté française – le 27 septembre: Les origines de la Fête du 27 septembre", [http://www.pcf.be/ROOT/fete\\_27\\_septembre/fete\\_generalites.html](http://www.pcf.be/ROOT/fete_27_septembre/fete_generalites.html)

<sup>56</sup> The central factor as to whether or not the celebrations engage people, depends on what it is that is being celebrated. In Sweden the national day is not popular, most likely because it was adopted in honour of constitutional reform in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the election of Gustav Vasa as King in 1523. Moreover, Sweden has not needed to assert itself to the same extent as, for example, Norway, which had to fight for its independence and which also displays a remarkable continuity in its celebrations. However, it should be noted, that Sweden has a traditional community day in Midsummer Eve filled with Swedish folklore and customs but without specific references to the 'nation'. In the case of two other national days in which popular participation is not evident, the Day of the Austrian Flag and Declaration of Neutrality (26 October, 1955) and the German Unification Day (3 October, 1990), additional factors must be taken into account. There are several potential founding moments in Austrian as well as in German history. As discussed in Chapter Four, in the case of Germany the many candidates for a national day added conflict to the debate until World War Two. However, in Germany, and to some extent in Austria, the main reason why these celebrations do not engage people, is that the nation as a moral community was undermined after World War Two. This has been expressed in a lack of symbolism and little enthusiasm for a day of the nation that would



It has been argued that national holidays have lost their appeal<sup>57</sup> and can no longer sustain a vision of the past. This is not consistent with my findings: on the contrary, national memories are continually being created or re-created as witnessed in the adoption of the national days in the Baltic States, Central and Eastern Europe. National holidays remain important when or if new memories are being created and new events commemorated in an ever-changing world.

#### **5.4 Symbols in Ceremonies**

Finally, it is important to focus on the symbols used during the national day ceremonies, and in particular national flags, anthems and monuments as essential 'shortcuts' to the nation. As Billig's thesis of banal nationalism suggests, national identity is flagged daily in a varied manner through national symbols and linguistic habits. The nation and nationhood are constituted by flags, symbols, coins, stamps, but also by turns of phrase and televised weather reports. It is through "small words, rather than grand memorable phrases"<sup>58</sup> and in the taken-for-granted knowledge that symbols play an essential role and maintain the feeling of national belonging.

Symbols, especially the use of symbols in ceremonies, are at the core of invented traditions according to Hobsbawm.<sup>59</sup> In this perspective, Bastille Day as well as

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constitute, ultimately, a moral community. The Länder, as well as Europe, have provided a new focus for a German identity.

<sup>57</sup> Gillis argues that the collective function (creating cohesion) of national ceremonies has decreased and that their commemorative function (remembering and honouring the dead) has gained a more individual character in what he describes as a 'post-national era'. See Gillis, 1994

<sup>58</sup> Billig, *Banal Nationalism*, 1995:93

<sup>59</sup> Hobsbawm & Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, 1992. The overall framework for 'invented traditions' is the state, as a tool in the hand of formal rulers and dominant groups. The wide-spread process of electoral democracy, which institutionalized mass-participation, also led to the discovery of the potency of 'irrational' elements. Controlling the national symbolism and traditions became therefore a goal, in order to maintain social order. For a complete understanding of the concept

Remembrance Sunday are examples of invented traditions. There is no doubt that the ruling elites realised the effectiveness of national ceremonies, and that these national celebrations or commemorations were new even if not 'invented' in terms of being 'fabricated' traditions. The concrete ceremonies may be new as regards their form, but not in their contents or references. Identity is not a static phenomenon and symbols and traditions, accordingly, are continuously being created, re-created, discovered and re-discovered.

If we look closely at these cases we find that Bastille Day, though officially established in 1880, was first celebrated in 1790 in memory of the foundation of the Republic. It was debated during the 19<sup>th</sup> century whether or not Bastille Day, unofficially celebrated before 1880 by the Republicans, was an appropriate Day. As regards Remembrance Sunday and its development into a tradition, various elements have been overlooked. Even if the commemoration could help enforce unity and control public dissatisfaction, and the elites had a lot to gain from a Remembrance ceremony in a country seething with unrest, there was clearly a demand from the population to commemorate their losses especially as the British government in 1915, had decided not to bring the dead back to Britain. Moreover, the idea of this tradition being 'invented' is misleading in this context. Remembering the dead of the Boer War (1899-1902) had served as a model for Remembrance Sunday, as a different feeling towards commemoration and public mourning was displayed, especially for the 3,500 dead volunteers. The need had

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*'invented tradition'*, a clearer distinction between *'invented'* and *'old traditions'*, another Hobsbawmian concept, ought to have included a more elaborate discussion of the role of the latter in nationalist movements. Such discussion is desirable especially as Hobsbawm admits that 'old traditions' have a binding social quality and that these were only to a small extent replaced by the innovated equivalents in connection with the secular decline of old religious traditions and customs.

been felt to commemorate them not only as soldiers but also as citizens, particularly as the measures taken to bury them and the care taken of their graves had been criticised. The Boer War, however, did not cause the same scale of distress as did World War One.<sup>60</sup> In the context of World War One, it is impossible to maintain that the British people were manipulated into commemorating their losses. On the contrary, it was the people who had made the greatest sacrifices. Mourning the dead in ceremonies is in fact not a modern phenomenon. It has existed throughout epochs and cultures.<sup>61</sup> Besides, the idea of dying for your fatherland was present in ancient times. Cicero, who was also a politician, wrote in the first century B.C.: “*O fortunata mors, quae naturae debita pro patria est potissimum reddita.*”<sup>62</sup> In short, there is a great difference between, on the one hand, elites choosing an arbitrary date to enforce patriotism, and, on the other, the choice of an existing date celebrated for a century as in the case of France (14 July), or of a day for remembering the dead as in Britain (11 November).

Hobsbawm's conceptual tool of invented tradition is from this point of view a simplification. It is true that we can clearly see the ruling elites at work in many ways before, during and after 1870-1914, for example in the formalisation of a Norwegian national costume in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the adoption of Constitution Day by the Weimar Republic in 1919. Out of the thirty-three national days accounted for in Chapter Four, twelve are older than 1870, six appear during 1870-1914, and fifteen are introduced after 1914. These figures suggest that a

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<sup>60</sup> Moriarty, 1991: 63-65

<sup>61</sup> See Smith, 2003

<sup>62</sup> In Bendz & Guterman, *Latinska sentenser och citat från två årtusenden*, 1968: 62. In English “What good fortune to give one’s fatherland the death one owes to nature” (translation by Dr. Bernt Elgenius).

‘successful’ pattern had been established in the celebrations of a national day by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which supports the idea that a new tradition had been invented.

However, it is not strange that many national days appear in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the age of nationalism it seems rather natural that national communities should start to celebrate their ideals and distinctiveness just like the religious communities of the past. Moreover, if we look closely at the national days established during 1870-1914, we find that they were not arbitrarily chosen. On the contrary, the days are related to the founding of the nation as, for example, in the case of Bulgarian Independence. With regard to the many national days that were formally established after the period which Hobsbawm links with the mass-production of ‘invented traditions’, these are also related to nationally significant events. A major cause for commemorations is independence (Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) and Hobsbawm does not account for the success of these celebrations through the concept of ‘invented tradition’.

By categorising the date of adoption of national symbols (national days and national flags), it is possible to identify the whole spectrum from old or modern traditions to new and ‘invented’ ones. In this context Confino argues:

the symbolic descriptions of Heimat were familiar phenomena throughout Europe in the age of ‘mass-producing traditions’. National individuality was articulated in a European symbolic language of similitudes. Among these similitudes were the mixture of pride stemming from traditions and from innovation in the representation of the nation, the mixed reactions to modernity as agent of progress and producer of anxiety and nostalgia, and the emphasis of national uniqueness.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Confino, 1997: 211

What authors such as Hobsbawm and Confino fail to acknowledge – this is clear in the case of Germany - is that traditions only work if people can identify with them. National celebrations may be new and even ‘created’ in some cases, in particular regarding their form. However, they are not best described as ‘invented’ if we imply that their contents and references are of a fabricated nature, considering that most European nations celebrate independence, the constitution and sovereignty, ideals for which millions of people have died.

Leaving this argument aside, Hobsbawm stresses that it is through languages of a symbolic discourse that the nation ‘communicates’ with its members and establishes social continuity. The language is manifested in the symbolism of buildings, monuments and statues as a traditional allegory, as well as in the theatrical idiom of an extension of the official and ritual spaces (for example the use of squares and monuments forming a focal point like the Place de la Concorde, the Arc de Triomphe and the Whitehall Cenotaph) through ceremonies, demonstrations or mass sporting occasions. The significance of all emotionally charged signs lies in the ritual practices connected with them, such as standing up when singing the national anthem and saluting the flag. National days serve here as the overall ritual framework and involve many micro-practices, such as the presentation of the colours to the President on Bastille Day, the flag-hoisting ceremony on Constitution Day, the two minutes silence or the laying of wreaths at the Cenotaph Ceremony on Remembrance Sunday.

The use of national symbols is integrated into these ceremonies, and they constitute rallying points intended to highlight the nation in a varied manner and to promote

national pride. The location and the monuments involved are also intimately related to the ceremonial symbolism.

National days are closely associated with national symbolism, which, in one way or another, expresses the character of the nation and of its virtues. Here the concern is with national flags, national anthems, and national monuments, the intrinsic links between symbol and ritual, and the use of symbols in a ceremonial context. In national ceremonies and commemorations, symbols are utilities or vehicles of meaning in ritual action. Nunn argues that symbols “convert the load of significance or complex socio-cultural meanings embedded in and generated by the ongoing processes of social existence into a communication currency”.<sup>64</sup> This means that shared socio-cultural meanings are communicated and transmitted through symbols in rituals. These also renew group-identity and provide an assurance of moral values. Within these ceremonies, symbols (acts, words, objects and artefacts) are vital as they construct the national message. National symbols, such as the flag and the anthem, are objects of worship and ways in which the nation manifests itself to the people. It is through these objects that the nation (the people) is able to worship itself.

#### 5.4.1 National Flags

The national flag has been dealt with extensively in Chapters Two and Three, so we may be brief here. National flags are displayed on all national days of Europe. France and Norway are two cases where displaying the flag is ubiquitous and can

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<sup>64</sup> Nunn, “Symbolism in a Ritual Context: Aspects of Symbolic Action”, 1973:580

be contrasted to Germany and its televised political ceremony where a single flag is discretely placed outside the ceremonial hall.

In France the whole of the Champs-Élysées is covered in national flags. Tricolours are on display on lamppost hangers along both sides of the avenue, and outside all official buildings, and all honorary guards, armed services and veterans carry regimental flags. Altogether thousands of Tricolours are shown alongside other standards and banners, proclaiming national feelings and pride. We may especially note the huge national flag hanging from the vaulted ceiling of the Arc de Triomphe over the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the four large national flags displayed around the Arch as these make the explicit connection between the nation, duty and sacrifice.

A similar connection between the nation and sacrifice is provided in Britain on Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph. Three flags hang from the monument itself: the English flag of St. George, the Union Jack and the blue Commonwealth flag with the Union Jack in its canton. In other words they represent the people of England, Britain and the Commonwealth whose sacrifices are commemorated in the ceremony.

Flag-hoisting ceremonies are part of all the national day celebrations in France, Britain and Norway. In Norway this is the signal for local celebrations to commence all over the country. An innumerable number of national flags are displayed and waved in the Citizens' Parade, which is as much a Flag Parade. In

Norway, the flag constitutes *the* symbol of belonging and is vital to the celebration of Constitution Day.

#### 5.4.2 National Anthems and Music in Ceremonies

Whether the ceremonies are military or civil in style, music constitutes an integral part of them. Music is provided in many forms in festive and celebratory concerts, by military units, massed bands, school bands or other civilian orchestras. The music is vital in setting the atmosphere for the ceremony, and the character of the pieces played is of great significance to the emotions that will be evoked. Processions or parades, military or civilian - or popular carnivals - are also central features of national celebrations and connected to music performances. The intention, here, is to explore the role of the national anthem as another symbol through which the nation is indirectly worshipped on the national day. Mosse<sup>65</sup> argues that national anthems which, together with flags, are widespread means of national self-representation, help the nation to penetrate the daily life of its people. We shall now see how they manage to do this.

The age of nationalism and the age of mass politics after the French Revolution introduced rhythmic elements into all ceremonies. As we have seen marches, parades and music helped to discipline the crowd, encouraged people to participate and made them feel they were part of a greater community. National anthems grew up simultaneously with a new kind of national consciousness, and anthems such as the English *God Save the King*, became officially adopted at this time. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century national anthems developed into an expression and a vehicle of modern



nationalism. *God Save the King* and the *Marseillaise* are the two main anthems which inspired the other European anthems.<sup>66</sup> Most national anthems were shaped by the wars of the French Revolution and by the Napoleonic Wars in particular, and Mosse concludes that the modern nation at its birth was a nation in arms:

The national anthem was part and parcel of a whole network of symbols through which the new nation sought to present itself to its people and engage their undivided allegiance. The flag, the anthem, and most national festivals always retained something of the nation-in-arms about them, even in times of peace. Within all of these national symbols, but especially in national anthems, waging war was an essential ingredient of national self-representation. Studying national anthems means examining how war was built into most nationalisms, which, in turn, formed a bridge through which the acceptance of war as an instrument of national politics became a factor almost taken for granted in modern life.<sup>67</sup>

References to war, conflict, death and brotherhood, were frequent at this time, illustrating the new experiences of the community, and became the main themes of many European anthems. Even if the ideal of 'youth' is not directly mentioned, the image of the young manly warrior dying for his country is present in, for example, the French *Marseillaise*. Many war anthems took a defensive posture, as did the German *Deutschlandlied* at first, with its focus on German unification. The usage of national anthems was brought to its climax by the Nazis and by the Italian Fascists, who instituted what Mosse calls 'a veritable cult of anthems' as part of their national worship.<sup>68</sup> The musical forms used by the Nazis and the Fascists were the same: the anthems were kept simple, plain and heroic. It was important that they were not sentimental, which was considered to reflect 'a weak and underdeveloped masculinity'. After World War Two the attitude towards death in war changed fundamentally, as was manifested by the anthems and also in the new type of war

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<sup>65</sup> Mosse. "National Anthems: The Nation Militant". 1993:13-26

<sup>66</sup> Nettle, *National Anthems*, 1967

<sup>67</sup> Mosse, 1993:14-16

<sup>68</sup> In Italy every fascist organization had its own official anthem although subordinated to the overall hymn 'La Giovinezza'. Mosse, 1993:21

memorials being commissioned. War was no longer glorified as an integral part of the nation's self-representation.

Not all anthems glorified war and death in war. Other recurrent themes in the European national anthems were, and still are, tributes to royalty and rulers, landscapes, peace and utopian visions. However, some royal anthems combine a tribute to the Monarch with the picture of the nation at war, such as the German *Heil Dir im Siegerkranz*<sup>69</sup> or the English *God Save the Queen*. The pastoral and peaceful hymns are confined to smaller nations, such as Switzerland, Norway and Finland. Many of these concentrated upon establishing an analogy between the nation (and its 'divine' foundation) and nature. The first verse of the Swiss national anthem, the *Schweizerpsalm* (1841), reads: "When the morning skies grow red and o'er us their radiance shed, Thou, O Lord, appeareth in their light. When the Alps glow bright with splendour, pray to God, to Him surrender, for you feel and understand, for you feel and understand, that He dwelleth in this land. That He dwelleth in this land."<sup>70</sup>

The British anthem was written in a warlike context, which explains its theme. It was performed at the Drury Lane Theatre in 1745, in presence of the King, by the actors who wanted to show loyalty during the Jacobite rebellion (1745-46) of Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie), the claimant to the English throne.<sup>71</sup>

The anthem was authorized by the government as the official national hymn in 1825

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<sup>69</sup> *Heil Dir im Siegerkranz* (*Hail to Thee in Victor's Garlands*) was the German imperial anthem 1871-1918. <http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Das-Lied-der-Deutschen>

<sup>70</sup> Bristow & Reed, *National Anthems of the World*. 1993

<sup>71</sup> *God Save the King* was distributed via the Gentleman's Magazine and in the anthology *Thesaurus Musicus* as early as 1745.

which makes it one of the oldest national anthems. The use of *God Save the Queen* on Remembrance Sunday in modern Britain is most interesting, as Church services in Britain have found it necessary to sing a different version. The original text contains the typical references to war and hostility: “O Lord our God arise, scatter her enemies, and make them fall: confound their politics, frustrate their knavish tricks, on Thee our hopes we fix: God save us all.”,<sup>72</sup> whereas the peaceful replacement sung in the Churches on Remembrance Sunday reads: “Thy choicest gifts in store, on her be pleased to pour, long may she reign: may she defend our laws, and ever give us cause, to sing with heart and voice: God Save the Queen.”<sup>73</sup>

We can also clearly hear how music is used to increase patriotic feelings on Remembrance Sunday. In this spirit *Rule Britannia*<sup>74</sup> commences the Cenotaph ceremony. *Beethoven's Funeral March* is played whilst wreaths are laid by the Cenotaph. Other musical pieces, such as *Nimrod* from the *Enigma Variations* by Elgar, are also given a central role. Arkwright's hymn *Supreme Sacrifice* has a poignant meaning because it links the sacrifices of the nation to the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus Christ. For this reason it has always been highly appreciated at unveiling ceremonies. Even if only the instrumental version is performed, the text being taken for granted, it sanctifies the experience: “Still stands His Cross from that dread hour to this like some bright star above the dark abyss; still, through the veil, the Victor's pitying eyes look down to bless our lesser calvaries.”<sup>75</sup> This

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<sup>72</sup> Nettle, 1967; Bristow & Reed, *National Anthems of the World*. 1993

<sup>73</sup> The comparison made refers to verse two, but a similar pattern is seen regarding the other verses.

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Augustine Arne composed the music to the poem *Rule Britannia* by James Thomson in 1740. The first verse of Rule Britannia reads: “When Britain first at Heaven's command arose from out the azure main, this was the charter, the charter of the land and guardian angels sang the strain: Rule Britannia! Britannia rule the waves, Britons never, never, never shall be slaves!”

<sup>75</sup> Moriarty, 1991:68

passage 'Still stands His Cross from that dread hour' has obtained a secular meaning and the sacrifice of Christ and that of the Unknown Soldier have merged into one.<sup>76</sup>

Many European anthems have been modelled on *La Marseillaise* in its revolutionary spirit and this is perhaps the most influential national anthem ever created. The *Marseillaise* is still of utmost symbolic importance in France, as is manifest on Bastille Day when the anthem is played, for example, during the presentation of the colours, lending special significance to this part of the ceremony. Vovelle reminds us that the anthem was first known as *Le Chant de guerre pour l'armée du Rhin*, and was written and performed in Strasbourg in April 1792 by Rouget de Lisle upon the news that France had declared war on the King of Bohemia and Hungary.<sup>77</sup> The song was well received and in the coming months it spread from Strasbourg to Paris. However, it was first and foremost a song of war, which is apparent in the refrain repeated after each of the seven verses: "Aux armes citoyens! Formez vos bataillons! Marchez, marchez, qu'un sang impur abreuve nos sillons." The passage 'may their impure blood flow in our fields' is characteristic of the time in which it was written. The *Marseillaise* was used as a revolutionary song directed not only against foreign armies but also against tyranny and counter-revolutionary forces: "Will vile despots become the masters of our fate?"<sup>78</sup> However,

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<sup>76</sup> The Memorial Cross is without any doubt the symbol of sacrifice and resurrection, which explains why the cross is the most common type of World War One memorials. Christian iconography has played a vital part in the mourning process as well as in the building of memorials, and it has affected the choice of musical pieces performed in the Remembrance ceremonies. Moriarty, 1991: 71

<sup>77</sup> For an interesting discussion of the history of the *Marseillaise* and the, at times, challenged authorship of Rouget de Lisle, see Vovelle, "La Marseillaise: War or Peace". 1998:28-74.

<sup>78</sup> This phrase, which in French reads: "De vils despotes deviendraient les maîtres de nos destinées!" makes it clear what is really at stake. The *Marseillaise* was a song against tyranny, which can be identified already in its first verse: *Arise children of the motherland, our day of glory has arrived! Over us, the bloodstained banner of tyranny holds sway! Oh, do you hear there in our fields the roar*

it was as a hymn of liberty that it became the anthem of the Republic as well as the anthem of the nation, invoking freedom and the devotion to the motherland: “Sacred love to our Motherland, guide and sustain our avenging hands! Liberty, oh dearest Liberty, come fight with your shielding bands!”<sup>79</sup>

Servan, Minister of war and a Girondist, stated in 1792: “the national anthem known as *La Marseillaise* is the *Te Deum* of the Republic, the song worthiest of the ears of free France”<sup>80</sup>, thus was associating the anthem with the evocative power of a religious hymn. Also known as *Hymne des Marseillais*, it was mentioned in terms of a national or revolutionary anthem during the Jacobin or Montagnard period of the Revolution, and in November 1793 the Convention ordered the anthem to be sung at all Republican spectacles. From 1794 onwards it was reported to have been “sung at every show and on every street corner in Paris”<sup>81</sup>, and as early as 1795 it was established by the Convention as the ‘national anthem’, which makes it the first officially adopted national anthem in Europe. Vovelle concludes that the *Marseillaise* was in other words part of the ‘cultural revolution’ which was a central feature of the revolutionary process.<sup>82</sup> However, the dramatic political changes in France during the following 80 years caused the *Marseillaise* to be frequently challenged.<sup>83</sup> But during the period of continuing national as well as international

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*of these ferocious soldiers? Who come right here in our midst to slaughter our sons and wives. Original text: Allons enfants de la patrie, le jour de gloire est arrivé! Contre nous de la tyrannie, l'étendard sanglant est levé! L'étendard sanglant est levé! Entendez-vous dans nos campagnes mugir ces féroces soldats? Qui viennent jusque dans nos bras égorger nos fils et nos compagnes!*

<sup>79</sup> Original text: *Amour sacré de la patrie, conduis, soutiens nos bras vengeurs! Liberté, Liberté chérie, combats avec tes défenseurs!* Vovelle.1998:28-74.

<sup>80</sup> Vovelle, 1998:37

<sup>81</sup> Vovelle, 1998:39

<sup>82</sup> Vovelle, 1998:39

<sup>83</sup> The *Marseillaise* was banned by Napoleon during the Empire and by Louis XVIII on the second Restoration (1815) because of its revolutionary associations. Authorized after the July Revolution of 1830 it was again banned by Napoleon III and not reinstated until 1879.

confrontations from 1879 to 1919 it was transformed from a revolutionary song into the national anthem. During this period it was the warlike aspects of the anthem that were emphasised rather than the revolutionary or democratic ones.

Today, the music and the military parade are given a significant place on Bastille Day, further underlining the associations between music and war.<sup>84</sup> The militaristic music of the parade is suggestive and grand. Music lends to the occasion a sense of solemnity evoked by the marching detachment or unit. Special marches have even been written with certain units in mind. As an example, the importance of the French Foreign Legion is emphasised by the majestic and slower pace in which they march and by the march that accompanies them.

Music is also most important in the festivities on Constitution Day in Norway, when school-bands perform in the Citizens' parade and the national anthem *Yes, we love this country* (*Ja vi elsker dette landet*) is sung on numerous occasions. Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, who wrote the text of the national anthem in 1859, has become a national symbol in himself and is considered one of 'the great four', together with Ibsen, Lie and Kielland; he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1903. The melody of the Norwegian anthem was written by Rikard Nordraak in 1864, after which the anthem was officially adopted.<sup>85</sup> Other solemn as well as stirring national songs are included in the celebrations, songs with characteristic titles such as *We are a nation too* and *The land we inherited*.

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<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Defence of France, [http://www.defense.gouv.fr/histoire/musique\\_militaire/index.html](http://www.defense.gouv.fr/histoire/musique_militaire/index.html)

The Norwegian anthem is completely different from the British and French anthems. Here, love for the nation is manifested in an affectionate way as exemplified by its first verse: “Yes, we love this country which looms up rocky and weathered above the sea with its thousand homes. [We] love it, love it and think about our mothers and fathers and the sagas that send dreams to our earth and the sagas that send, send dreams to our earth.”<sup>86</sup> Links between a modern independent Norway and its ‘ancient past’ are made in verse two where continuity with the ancient kingdom is claimed. There is for example an extraordinary associative link between Olav II (1015-1028), also known as Saint Olaf, and the future flag of Norway: “This country was saved by Harald with his great effort, this country was protected by Håkon whilst Øyvind sang; Olav painted the country with a cross of his blood.”<sup>87</sup>

The German National Anthem is also of interest in this context. As was earlier mentioned, the Germans have changed national anthems over the centuries. The imperial anthem *Heil dir im Siegerkranz* (*Hail to Thee in Victor’s Garlands*) was used as prior to 1919, and sung to the melody of *God Save the Queen*. *Deutschland Über Alles* served as the national anthem from 1922 to 1945. The ill-famed title, meaning ‘Germany, esteemed above everything in the world’, takes into consideration the period of struggles for unification of the formerly independent principalities.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Bristow & Reed, 1993; National Anthems Website, <http://www.national-anthems.org/ref-world.htm#nnn>; <http://david.national-anthems.net/no.htm>

<sup>86</sup> Original text: “Ja, vi elsker dette landet, som det stiger frem, furet, værbitt over vannet, med de tusen hjem. Elsker, elsker det og tenker på vår far og mor og den saganatt som senker drømme på vår jord. Og den saganatt som senker, senker drømme på vår jord.” Bristow & Reed, 1993

<sup>87</sup> Bristow & Reed, 1993

<sup>88</sup> The first line: “Deutschland, Deutschland über alles, über alles in der Welt”, was originally directed against German rulers opposed to unification. The anthem, however, was later reinterpreted more aggressively, when the myth of the Battle of Langemarck after World War One had become the

The vital relationship between music and nationalism is that music has the power to raise half-conscious emotions into a sphere of complete national consciousness. Music has also an integrative function in collective gatherings and ceremonies, national or religious, and the way it is used offers many insights into the integrative power facilitated through rituals. In medieval Europe, during times of religious divisions, struggle and warfare, religious songs helped maintain religious fervour and faith and were used also for political aims. An example of this is found at the Battle of Sempach in 1386, when the Swiss fought to establish their independence from the House of Habsburg. Before the battle the Austrians were said to hear the Swiss singing *Antiphona de morte* by the 9th century monk Notker Balbulus of St. Gall, a practice later used to explain the Swiss victory. This event is described by Nettles<sup>89</sup> who illustrates the inspirational power of Christian hymns in the German-speaking lands. In time, in cases where faith was tinged by national endeavour, anthems came to maintain national pride and patriotism. As a general rule, national anthems, have survived their initial significance and have in e.g. Britain and France, been drained of the context in which they were written. National anthems, as one expression of nationhood and memory, inspire feelings of gratitude, hope and belonging.

#### 5.4.3 National Monuments and Ceremonial Locations

The peak of the construction of European national capitals took place between 1850 and 1914, an era of nationalist mobilization, mass education, class polarization,

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symbol of triumph of the heroic youth and it turned into an integral part of the Nazis' attempt at regeneration through war. It took several years to settle on an anthem in Germany after World War Two, and finally it was decided to use a 'revised version' of the original anthem, i.e. using only the third verse calling for 'unity', 'justice' and 'freedom'.



mass migration and urbanization. Therborn<sup>90</sup> argues that the history and the vision of collective identities are expressed at the intersection of art and power, ritual and urban design, architecture and imagery, capital city architecture and monumentality. The referential framework of the iconographers of the *Belle Époque* was that of a historicism looking towards the future with a mass didactic purpose, which, at the same time, in its architecture and sculpture drew inspiration from the Classicism of Antiquity and the medieval Gothic. Therborn identifies several components or monumental cornerstones of European capital cities, formed during the Belle Époque.

First of all, the city had to provide a space for circulation. The boulevards became a new public space, the centre of elegant commerce, parades as well as of rapid traffic. The central institutions of power were also manifested architecturally in magnificent parliament buildings, palaces of justice or, where the monarchy was still significant, royal palaces<sup>91</sup>. The capital also needed to be nationalised through a set of institutions associated with national high culture: national operas, museums, libraries and universities, a process starting in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These served as city landmarks, and became significant in visualising the shared national heritage.

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<sup>89</sup> Nettle, 1967:7-33

<sup>90</sup> Therborn, "Monumental Europe: The National Years. On the Iconography of European Capital Cities", 1996

<sup>91</sup> It is important to recognise that a ritual rhythm existed in the capitals before the age of nationalism. This rhythm was constituted by royal births, marriages, coronations and funerals, but also by religious ceremonies and festivities. Consequently, it was the monarchy and aristocracy, together with the associations of war and religious devotion (e.g. Notre Dame, the Vatican, Westminster Abbey and St Paul's), that left their imprints on the cities.

Finally, the capitals of Europe also polarised the urban space<sup>92</sup> when monuments and statues were built to affirm a common national identity.

As one might expect, the capitals with new national regimes erected more spectacular monuments than those of the old ones, especially where it was important to legitimise the rupture with the past. But in whatever form, urban iconography was aimed at the public as symbols of commonality and identity. Therborn argues that the present pattern of public space building had emerged well before 1914.

An illuminating example is the appropriation of the *Walhalla*<sup>93</sup> in Germany, named after the resting place for heroes killed in battle in Nordic mythology, and originally built in honour of German unity as a ‘sacred’ place of contemplation and decorated with statues of patriotic Germans. It was opened in 1842, suitably on the anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig. With the new conception of public space, the *Walhalla* was extended (1920) with an ‘open’ space outside the monument, intended to accommodate mass events such as patriotic plays and dances. The use of national monuments, an essential part of the liturgy of public festivals, was adopted and extended by Nazi Germany. ‘Sacred’ spaces were created around monuments, and in this way they formed part of the framework for mass meetings and festivals, where celebrations could be held under the auspices of special ‘mass-

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<sup>92</sup> A new conception of public space was created during the Revolution in France. The year 1789 marked the break from royal absolutism, and left a lasting mark on Paris through the symbolic investment in public space. The royal squares changed their names and functions and received a new national meaning, as has been mentioned in Chapter Four, with Place Louis XV becoming Place de la Révolution (later Place de la Concorde). All squares were renamed and provided with suitable monuments with a national and republican significance, and became important in French political life.

meeting-techniques'.<sup>94</sup> As regards the *Walhalla*, Hitler proceeded to select new heroes to be immortalised inside the monument, since the notion of 'racially impure' representatives of the German nation had been addressed.

The relationship between artistic expressions of nationhood is intimate and evocative.<sup>95</sup> National monuments are therefore central ceremonial instruments reinforcing a permanent feeling of belonging since history is used as a mediator between the past, the present and the future. In connection with the ceremonies on national days they are usually of great national significance. Monuments are important artefacts of a nation's history as they provide continuity with the past. Although their significance may change through time, they reach an 'objective' status as part of the national landscape. Monuments are central to ceremonies as they provide the framework and platform for the commemoration, as well as a stable space for popular participation throughout challenges and changes. In other words, symbolic action is made permanent through the construction of national monuments and this is the reason why we find significant national monuments being involved in the national day celebrations in Europe. Illuminating examples are Red Square in Moscow, Wenceslas Square in Prague, Vabaduse Plats in Tallinn, Hősök Tere (Heroes' Square) in Budapest, Piazza della Repubblica in Rome, Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Puerta del Sol in Madrid, Senaatintori (Senate Square) in Helsinki, Karl Johann's Avenue in Oslo, Trafalgar Square, the Cenotaph and

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<sup>93</sup> The *Walhalla* was built outside Regensburg overlooking the Danube. Mosse, 1975: 53-56

<sup>94</sup> Mosse, 1975: chapters 3-5

<sup>95</sup> See for example: Bhabha, *Nation and Narrative*, 1990; Dyserinck & Syndram. *Europa und das nationale Selbstverständnis*, 1988; Smith, "Art and Nationalism in Europe", 1993:64-80; Smith, *Patriotism and Neo-Classicism: The 'Historical Revival' in French and English Painting and Sculpture, 1746-1800*. 1987; Smith, "The Suffering Hero: Belisarius and Oedipus in Late 18<sup>th</sup> Century French and British Art". 1989: 634-40

Whitehall in London, Place de la Concorde and Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Historically speaking, the style and use of monuments became crucial elements in public and national festivals, once rituals of shared worship were rendered useful in creating new bonds of loyalty.

In his *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Smith<sup>96</sup> claims that the use of historical space or poetic landscape with reference to ‘golden ages’ constitutes an important link between the founding fathers and the members of the nation. In other words, monuments, statues and squares provide a site for mythologies. As illustrated, special rites and locations are prescribed around these heroic ancestors making clear their relationship to the nation and evoking extraordinary emotions. Most poignant are the tombs of national ancestors, heroes and statesmen, in particular when referring to national loss and triumph on a grand scale, such as the tombs of Unknown Soldiers, cenotaphs and cemeteries for the mass dead. The significance of these monuments lies above all in their symbolic character, re-presenting the nation to itself in its most dramatic guise. The commemorations around the monuments of the war dead are directed towards the whole nation, which reaffirms a sense of national unity and continuity.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, the monuments to the fallen are also central, according to Smith, to the idea of linear (national) development, that is birth, growth, decline and, most important, rebirth. Anderson describes the links as follows:

No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely *because* they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times. To feel the force of this

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<sup>96</sup> Smith, 1986:174-208

<sup>97</sup> Smith, “Commemorating the Dead, Inspiring the Living: Maps, Memories and Moralities in the Recreation of National Identities”. 1996

modernity one has to imagine the general reaction to the busy-body who ‘discovered’ the Unknown Soldier’s name or insisted on filling the cenotaph with some real bones. Sacrilege of a strange, contemporary kind! Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable mortal remains or immortal souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly *national* imaginings.<sup>98</sup>

Within the cult of the fallen, the links between nationalism, death and sacrifice are powerful and have a strong affinity with religious ‘imaginings’. Anderson<sup>99</sup> claims that nations are distinctive exactly through their particular style of imagination; and the persuasive power of the nation is manifested in that citizens are willing to die for their communities, and this can only be explained through the imagined idea of fraternity.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century had been a century of commemorations *for* the people rather than *of* the people. Memorials reminded the people of fallen kings, generals, martyrs and revolutionary leaders, and it was only the officers who had their names inscribed and graves marked on the war memorials in Europe. The democratisation of war memorials first started at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in particular in the course of World War One, when commemorations became a mass phenomenon. The reason was simply that the scale of death was massive and that nations resorted to the ‘tombs of unknown soldiers’ to make remembering and mourning a collective act, as all and none were remembered by the same monument. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier came to be the true centre of the cult of the fallen, and an altar of the fatherland. It was a place where a crowd could participate in regular ceremonies, reminding them of their, and the nation’s mission.<sup>100</sup> The idea of the ‘cult of the fallen’ refers to regular ceremonies, but also to the care with which the Unknown

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<sup>98</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. 1991:9

<sup>99</sup> Anderson, 1991: 9-46

Soldier was chosen, and the pomp with which he was brought home and buried. The importance of the Unknown Soldier is also emphasised by the following examples. In Italy a bereaved mother selected the Unknown Soldier by putting white flowers on one of eleven coffins, in Belgium it was a blinded veteran, whereas in Romania a war orphan pointed to one of ten coffins and stated 'This is my father'.<sup>101</sup> These examples all testify to the power and appeal that the Unknown Soldier exercised at the end of World War One, in which the cult of the fallen constituted a potent myth-symbol complex.<sup>102</sup>

The commemorations of the fallen soldier in varying forms occupied several of the participating war nations. Counterparts to the Cenotaph in Whitehall and the Unknown Soldier's tomb in Westminster Abbey in London and the Arc de Triomphe and 'le Tombeau du Soldat Inconnu' in Paris, were created in Rome and Berlin. In Rome, where the tomb of the war dead was positioned after World War One at the Vittorio Emmanuele Monument (erected in 1910) their memory was linked to that of the struggle for Italian unification. It was not until 1931 that a neoclassical guardhouse was designated for the Unknown Soldier in Berlin, even if a heightened national consciousness had earlier been displayed through a variety of

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<sup>100</sup> Smith, 2003: 246

<sup>101</sup> Inglis, 1993:11

<sup>102</sup> It is of course true that this new type of worship also provoked anger, often on the grounds that the needs of survivors were ignored. However, after World War Two the representation of memory took a very different form and shape – among the allies as well as in the Soviet Union, Germany and Japan. Since more civilians died than soldiers the civilian deaths could no longer be ignored. Once again, military cemeteries were constructed (although they were forbidden in Germany until the 1950s), but also places of so called 'living memory' in terms of parks, churches, sports stadiums and hospitals. A new tendency emerged to treat veterans as national heroes. Inglis, 1993

war memorials and ceremonial rites. This was part of an identity re-creating process that after World War One was particularly important for a defeated Germany.<sup>103</sup>

The Unknown Soldier is a central national symbol and a personification of collective sentiments. The respect paid to the tombs of Unknown Soldiers, manifest around the world, glorifies the sacrifice made in the name of the nation. Thus, mass death is used to inspire the living through the rituals of mass commemoration. The war dead are also symbolically united in these memorials in a national brotherhood illustrated by one memorial inscription: "Sanctify the ties that bind us to the Unseen."<sup>104</sup>

The burial of the Unknown Soldier in London also involved another central monument, namely Westminster Abbey. The Cenotaph was unveiled as the empty tomb of the Unknown Soldier whereas the coffin of the real Unknown Soldier was carried through London in a procession in order to be re-buried in Westminster Abbey in 1920. King points out: "The warrior's tomb does not represent a body at all. It appears only as a marble slab in the floor of Westminster Abbey. The crucial image was not the tomb itself, but the story of the selection of the body from the cemeteries on the Western Front, in circumstances which guaranteed it would remain unidentifiable."<sup>105</sup> The French followed the British example and reburied the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe. They, too, used the symbolic inscription

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<sup>103</sup> In the case of the former Soviet Union the cult of the war dead has been especially noted after World War Two during the communist era. Ignatieff concludes in the case of the former Soviet Union: "The cult of the Soviet war dead is a conscious attempt to draw meaning for the rituals of the present from the vast reservoir of past suffering. If Soviet society does worship anything it is the horror of its collective sacrifice." Ignatieff, "Soviet War Memorials", 1976: 159

<sup>104</sup> Inscription on the Tredegar War Memorial in Wales. Moriarty, 1991: 63-65

<sup>105</sup> King, 1998: 139

‘warrior’, a term chosen to emphasise the notion of a timeless hero, a heroic sacrifice of a heroic age.<sup>106</sup>

The construction of a temporary ‘Cenotaph’ was first proposed in response to the need for a saluting point in Whitehall for the peace celebrations in July 1919, and it became the centre of Remembrance Day in Britain where it stands as a reminder to the living of their indebtedness to the dead.

The Cenotaph was the answer: a catafalque symbolic of the fallen and the victory. As soon as it was unveiled in 1920, the Cenotaph was visited by 400,000 people in three days. The Cenotaph fulfilled the function of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, in spite of the fact that such a tomb had been constructed in Westminster Abbey. But the abbey was too cluttered with memorials and tombs of famous Englishmen to provide the appropriate space for pilgrimages or celebrations, and it was the Cenotaph which became the focal point for the march-past on Armistice Day. However, a direct connection between the Cenotaph and the tomb was drawn by the king, when, after unveiling the Cenotaph, he walked behind the gun carriage which bore the coffin of the Unknown Soldier into the abbey.<sup>107</sup>

People put their wreaths by the Cenotaph, and the emotionally charged two minutes silence took place here for the first time in the presence of large crowds. At this moment a ceremonial *chronotope* was created, which connected on the one hand national and individual memory, and on the other the past and the present. Lutyens’ Cenotaph has been described as a work of genius because of its anonymity and simplicity, providing the people with a focus for collective mourning and allowing people to ascribe their own meanings to it, which is true for all symbols.<sup>108</sup> In the contemporary Remembrance Day ceremony the monument of the Cenotaph is used on television to evoke associations of sacred sacrifice as music by Elgar is played

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<sup>106</sup> Inglis, 1993: 7-31

<sup>107</sup> Mosse, 1990: 95-96

<sup>108</sup> Winter, *Sites of memory, sites of mourning: The Great War in European cultural history*, 1995:104



and a picture of the inscription 'The Glorious Dead' on the Cenotaph is simultaneously transmitted to the viewers.

The Unknown Soldier, buried under the Arc de Triomphe is part of the ceremonial framework for Bastille Day with the route from *Étoile* to the *Tuileries*, constituting a *Via Triumphalis*<sup>109</sup>. The symbolism of the Arc de Triomphe and of the Unknown Soldier involves the elements of sacrifice and death in the name of France, reminding the spectators of the reasons why the nation is the focus and object of honour. The Arch and the Unknown Soldier's tomb are also associated with the violent revolutionary memory of Place de la Concorde, which conveniently provides the links between the beginning of the first French Republic and of modern France. Thus the intention is to produce a feeling of belonging and of national pride. The military parade is also staged in such a way that one never loses sight of the Arc de Triomphe. The parting of the parade around Place de la Concorde in a precise fashion makes one think of a solemn religious parade parting before the high altar: the altar within a secular context being Place de La Concorde and the ideals worshipped those of the Republic.

One can fully grasp the emotional meaning of the Unknown Soldier's tomb at the Arc de Triomphe by asking: what would be the implications for France, as far as its national dignity is concerned, if the soldier buried at the Arc - a cultural symbol of the highest national and emotional significance - was not French? As an indication of the tomb significance we find that the desecration of it is seen as an act of

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<sup>109</sup> Therborn, 2002

sedition and also a question of definition. Monique Wittig and Christine Delphi, in a company of French feminists, laid a wreath for the 'Unknown Soldier's wife' on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris in the 1990s. Accused of 'dishonouring' and violating the memory of the soldier in his role as a national symbol for France, the women were arrested and kept at the nearest police station, vilified by the weight of a patriarchal society. The symbols of a heroic past can in this instance also be described as genderbound, conveying a history of a male-oriented structure.

The story above addresses an interesting question beyond the scope of this thesis: who is allowed to identify with the nation? This is important, since it is quite clear that in terms of formal ceremonies men participate to a much higher degree than women. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the appeal of national ceremonies is higher among men than women, as little is known of the wider audience on the ground and of the number of viewers watching the ceremonies on television. If we use the remembrance ceremonies in the United Kingdom as an example, and look at the participation of different generations, it would seem reasonable that the appeal should be higher among those who were directly affected by the wars, i.e. those who lost relatives and friends. It may be supposed that ceremonies have a greater appeal for the older than the younger members of the community because of the memory that they evoke, but there is no hard evidence for this, and some cases such as Norway point to the opposite.

Looking at the question of the appeal and participation in ceremonies among the elite as opposed to the people, we have seen that the remembrance ceremonies are

definitely a ‘mass-act’. On Bastille Day elite participation is high in the official ceremony, but there is a mass audience and the dancing in local squares and the fireworks clearly have mass appeal.<sup>110</sup>

#### 5.4.4 Symbolic Micro-Practices

Monuments are also central as they provide a ritual space and a home for ‘symbolic micro-practices’, that is, ceremonies within the overall framework of the national day ceremony. The two minutes silence for the war dead on 11 November is one of these practices and it became an emotionally charged event in itself after it was first introduced in 1919 at the Cenotaph ceremony.<sup>111</sup> At the time the Metropolitan Police was instructed to stop the traffic for two minutes, people went to their windows, and into the streets to form a kind of congregation.<sup>112</sup> In many ways the silence constituted the core of the national homage to the dead:

The two minutes’ silence, which was the hub of the national homage to the dead, was instituted by the government, in the King’s name, but relied for its implementation on voluntary co-operation from local authorities and others who controlled public spaces or places of work. The government communicated its intentions to those members of the public whose co-operation it hoped for through newspapers. The official press release announcing the arrangements for Armistice Day 1919 states: The Government feel that carrying out the King’s wishes [for the ceremony] must be left to the sympathetic good will of the community. No general instructions can ensure the success of a ceremony, which can only be truly impressive if it is universal and spontaneous.<sup>113</sup>

A curious contradiction is to be found in the quotation above when it speaks indirectly of ‘enforced volition’ by which the government was clearly trying to

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<sup>110</sup> Little is known of the appeal of and participation in national ceremonies, in relation to gender, age, class or ethnicity, apart from what we can witness directly in audience participation. However, as noted by Gillis, the working class, ethnic minorities and women “gained admission to national memories at an even slower pace than they were admitted to national representative and educational institutions”. Gillis, 1994:10

<sup>111</sup> Homberger, 1976; Ingils, 1993

<sup>112</sup> King, 1998: 20

<sup>113</sup> King, 1998: 23-24

guide public spontaneity in a certain direction. The sites of remembrance were also chosen to facilitate quiet reflection so that a special relationship could grow between the dead (and the memorials built in their honour) and the public. Within this context the Silence became an expression of a common purpose stated without words.<sup>114</sup> It evolved into a respected practice throughout Britain, as a way of recognising the heroism of the nation. The Silence is still treated as a ‘sacred act’ honouring the war dead.

Another symbolic micro-practice at the Cenotaph and other war memorials refers to the wreaths of poppies laid by the participants at the ceremony and to the red poppies worn by them. These practices constitute visible ways of remembering, and the red wreaths against the white monument create a dramatic sight. The red poppy worn by spectators and participants and by the population for weeks in advance emphasises unity and constitutes a sign of belonging.<sup>115</sup> The poppy makes people physically aware of their membership in a community and has become a way of renewing their national vows. The British Legion, responsible for the march-past of regiments at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday, has from 1927 been hosting a Remembrance Concert at the Royal Albert Hall and concludes the ceremony with a shower of poppies from the dome – each poppy representing a dead soldier, known or unknown.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> King, 1998: 228-229

<sup>115</sup> The red poppy is also the symbol of the “Poppy Appeal” and the raising of funds for charity. According to the British Legion Official Website, 57 per cent of the adults in Britain were reported wearing a poppy in 1995 and the number had increased to 73 per cent in 2001. See British Legion Official Website “Poppy Appeal: History of the Poppy”, [http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/who/poppy\\_history.asp](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/who/poppy_history.asp)

The Norwegian equivalent to the poppy is the red ribbon or a red band hung on the left side of the chest over the heart.<sup>117</sup> It constitutes, in the same way as the poppy, a symbolic link between Norway and the individual and reinforces a feeling of unity and belonging. Another main national symbol, namely the national costume (the bunad), is described in the previous chapter. Eriksen argues that this was originally a deliberately designed national object, although already worn in some parts of Norway, and from a Hobsbawmian perspective, he writes:

In many cases, the so-called ancient, typically Norwegian customs, folk tales, handicrafts and so on were neither ancient, typical nor Norwegian [...] many of the 'typical folk costumes' which are worn at public celebrations such as Constitution Day were designed by nationalists early in the twentieth century. Most of the customs depicted as typical came from specific mountain valleys in southern Norway.<sup>118</sup>

In Norway, as well as in Britain, it is evident that the Royal Family is a national symbol. In Norway the King and his family greet the main parade in Karl Johan's Avenue from the balcony of the royal castle. This is symbolically the most charged moment of the main celebration in Oslo. As a comparison we can cite Cannadine who has made a ceremonial link between the Monarch and his family, the nation and all families in the British context:

The Monarchy appeared, particularly on grand ceremonial occasions, as the embodiment of consensus, stability and community. Indeed, the great royal rituals, the Armistice Day ceremonial, and the ever-expanding cult of Christmas (in both of which latter events the royal family figured strongly) were the three greatest celebrations of consensus, in which the royal family, individual families and the national families were all conflated.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Inglis, 1993

<sup>117</sup> During the commemoration of Armistice Day in France we find a similar display of symbolism as the national colours are displayed on wreaths, buttons and small rosettes, the latter being similar to the 'cockade' used during and after the revolution. I am grateful for this observation, made on Remembrance Sunday 11 November 2001 in Paris, to Dr. Usherwood, King's College, University of London.

<sup>118</sup> Eriksen, 2002: 101-102

<sup>119</sup> Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: British Monarchy and the Invention of Tradition, 1820-1977". 1983:140

With this in mind we can appreciate the symbolism on Remembrance Sunday when the Queen is making her tribute to the Glorious Dead by laying her wreath on behalf of the nation.<sup>120</sup>

## 5.5 Concluding Remarks: Awareness and Sanctification

National days are powerful ceremonial days that bind past, present and future generations together. National virtues and values are derived from the past, and the ‘moral’ direction of the future is upheld by future generations celebrating the same ceremonies, and in effect, the same virtues and values.

The national day is one collective image by which nations are projected and advertised to ‘insiders’ as well as to ‘outsiders’. Its *aim* is to reinforce and sustain the beliefs of a group and revive group identity and unity. As we have also seen, national ceremonies “do not differ from regular religious ceremonies, either in their object, the results which they produce, or the processes employed to attain these results”.<sup>121</sup> In other words, the significant dimension is to be found in the form and style of worship rather than the content. National symbolism can therefore rightfully be said to form a central part of a ‘civic’ religion for which self-representation is as crucial as religious symbolism was earlier. Nationalism in

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<sup>120</sup> Very briefly, there are also many other ceremonial occasions in which the presence of the Royal family provides potent symbolism. Historically, at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in 1953 the Queen promised to abide by and uphold the moral standards of society. It has also become clear that the royal families in Britain and in Norway still constitute a potent symbol of the nation as manifested in various royal events, which have not lost their appeal. Examples of such celebrations are the Golden Jubilee, weddings (Prince and Princess of Wales, Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Norway), and funerals (Princess of Wales and Queen Mother). Of special interest is the Golden Jubilee – which coincided with the FIFA World Cup in 2002 – and with national fervour at its peak, the nation was successfully centred around the Monarchy. On the other hand, we may also remember that the funeral of Diana, the Princess of Wales, was used by the nation to express its discontent with the Royal Family.

<sup>121</sup> Durkheim. 1976:427

Europe continues in a symbolic manner the Christian view of the world, where hopes and fears are controlled and acted out within ceremonial and liturgical forms.<sup>122</sup>

With the Revolution in France a new iconography and new rituals commemorating the nation, including festivals marked by mass participation, were established. The need to commemorate arose directly from the ideological desire to justify the break with the past and from the cult of heroic martyrdom (e.g. Le Peletier, Bara and Marat). Moreover, it was essential to inaugurate a new society and in this context rituals and symbols help to reinforce and maintain a new social structure. Again, it is worth emphasising the ever-present irony of Bastille Day. Today, national memory is presented in a way that allows the official ceremonies to be performed in the presence of royalty. Bastille Day is accordingly a good example, not only of national amnesia, but also of national formation, integration and maintenance.

The British commemoration of the war dead began after World War One in the age of mass politics when a new 'democratic' kind of national consciousness came into being. Once again, national rituals and symbols were used to engage the attention and enthusiasm of the masses.<sup>123</sup> Remembrance Sunday has been commemorated ever since it was first established, in much the same way, drawing on both military and civilian participation. As we have seen, the Day constitutes a national funeral and a day of unity for Britain, which is extraordinary in a time of devolution and

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<sup>122</sup> Mosse, 1975. Having said this, we also have to take into consideration that nationalism as a 'civic' religion may be subject to considerable secularisation, as can be argued to be the case in e.g. Sweden. For a related discussion on 'Religion and Nationhood' see Martin, *A General Theory of Secularization*, 1978

ethno-national revival. In this context the parallels have been noted between the symbolism of the remembrance ceremony – general conduct, the silence, the Last Post and Reveille, the wreaths – and a Christian funeral.

In the struggle for independence against the dominance of Denmark and Sweden, Constitution Day (17 May) provided Norway with a channel through which to express its uniqueness and distinctiveness after the establishment of the Constitution. This was essential to the identity-formation process and was an integral element in the creation of a Norwegian culture and the rise of Norwegian nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the case of Norway's history, the 17 May has been crucial in the annual renewal and maintenance of Norwegian-ness. This is a unique celebration owing to the high degree of participation, and, furthermore, it has the character of a Children's Day and is as such a joyful commemoration of the founding moment of the nation.

In the case of Germany, with its lack of national festivals, we may find that the nation serves as a moral community from another perspective. Throughout history there has been a problem of finding an appropriate day for Germans to celebrate. In other words there has never been a day on which the different social, political and cultural groups of Germany were able to unite. Furthermore, when Germany, its leaders and their actions were condemned after World War Two, the entire nation was also challenged. When a nation is under scrutiny, it becomes difficult to strengthen national ties through celebrations that are events of moral (re-)making.

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<sup>123</sup> Mosse, 1990



When appropriate national festivities could not be found, national identity was weakened. The lack of national festivities in Germany is an expression of contradictory feelings towards issues of nationality; celebrations in the past had identified the 'other' by reviving anti-French, anti-Semitic and anti-Communist feelings. Moreover, today it seems as if Germany is even turning away from reviving notions of nationhood, and focuses instead on 'Europe' as a way of acquiring a new neutral past (or sanctifying the past) and a new identity. Today it is 'Europe' rather than 'Germany' that to a great extent provides a focal point, and many aspects of German 'nationhood' have found a channel in the European Union. Culturally and politically 'Europe' offers a new history, or even a new way out of a shameful past<sup>124</sup>, and economically Europe provides a new institutional framework, in which Germany constitutes an important part of the 'frame'. In other words, to return to the newly established Unification Day: the lack of national symbols and ceremonies is an expression of the lack of assertion and ease or comfort in a German national identity.

The national day, as the main national ceremony, makes people aware of who they are, in relation to 'us' and to 'others', through the celebration or commemoration of distinctiveness, through symbols and micro-practises used on the day. The ceremonies are repeated complexes of symbolism and constitute for this reason an anchor in an ever-changing world.

However, whether national ceremonies also create solidarity, unity and cohesion is another matter. Durkheim maintained that societies become united through rituals

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<sup>124</sup> Schulze, Interview 20 May 2002. Director of the German Historical Institute London.

bringing about feelings of exaltation and enthusiasm, which were carried over into daily life. It is in this way consensus, or conformity, about social taboos and values comes into existence.<sup>125</sup> But national ceremonies include larger and at the same time highly divided groups, in terms of class, religion, ethnicity, region and gender, compared to the rituals of smaller societies studied by Durkheim.

With the content of this chapter in mind, it is fair to say that the preservation of ceremonies and the production of new ones are intended to create cohesion and express a sense of unity. But this does not mean that national ceremonies automatically produce a sense of togetherness. This has been demonstrated in the case of Germany. Ceremonies without popular support will have little effect. Popular support and participation, in turn, is a function of whether or not they strike a chord with the members of the community. For this reason we cannot assume that ceremonies in themselves automatically create cohesion – unity, togetherness, solidarity and loyalty.

Simmel<sup>126</sup> drew attention to the role of external war and conflict, or the threat thereof, as a form of sociation that make boundaries more distinct and thereby binds people together. Cohesion, in this context, does not refer to an absence of conflict or a national idyll. It can best be described as an expression of the idea ‘we stand together’. In Britain during World War One, expressions of unity could be found in the war effort, and conflict with the external world did create a strong national bond. At the same time, domestic disunity was channelled through strikes and

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<sup>125</sup> Evans-Pritchard, *Theories of Primitive Religion*. 1965: 100-122

<sup>126</sup> Simmel, *Conflict, and the Web of Group-Affiliations*. 1964

demonstrations for peace. According to Nairn<sup>127</sup>, World War One virtually saved England from civil war. In other words, despite internal conflict, an overall sense of unity based on opposition against external aggression was possible. On the other hand, wars and conflicts may both foster and undermine cohesion, as pointed out by Smith<sup>128</sup>. In Russia during World War One, internal conflicts predominated over external ones as expressed through the fall of Tsarist Russia and the rise of Bolshevism.

We also have to consider that the factual references of some ceremonies change. Bastille Day was originally celebrated by the new Republic as the revolt against the Ancien Régime. It is today an expression of nationhood. Some ceremonies, however, do not create consensus as regards what is to be commemorated. In Russia, the former national day, the Day of the Great October Socialist Revolution became known as the Day of Accord and Reconciliation in 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and was exchanged for Russia Day in 2004 (12 June), on the grounds of being 'ideologically outdated'.<sup>129</sup>

In the process through which the nation sanctifies itself, the main thing to emphasise is the key role played by symbols. The national flag is in many ways treated as a 'sacred' object and the national day as a sacred activity, and as central components of national worship they have been raised above every-day life.

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<sup>127</sup> Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*. 1977: 273

<sup>128</sup> The role of wars and conflicts in the formation of ethnic communities and their imagery is also emphasised by Smith. See Smith, "War & Ethnicity: the role of warfare in the formation, self-images and cohesion of ethnic communities". 1981: 375-397

<sup>129</sup> Ria-Novosti. "An Odd Choice of Holidays: Deputies Play with the Calendar", 24 November 2004, Moscow: Russian News and Information Agency. 2004

Moreover, protests that would involve for example burning the Tricolour on Bastille Day or shouting during the two minutes silence on Remembrance Sunday would be seen as acts of desecration. The persistence of symbols and ceremonies over time also suggests that the nation is regarded as a sacred category, set apart from mundane activity. For this reason the following idea can be put forward: the more national symbols (such as the flag and the national day) are sanctified, the stronger the sense of belonging. The respect shown national symbols and national ceremonies can hereby be seen as an indication of the strength of national identity.

To sum up, it has been argued that national ceremonies, such as the national day, serve as convenient means of analysing the creation and maintenance of national identities. They facilitate social life by creating and reinforcing social values and, on such a basis, constitute uniting elements. But, although ceremonies make people aware of who they are, they do not necessarily create cohesion. Ceremonies are imbued with meanings, but they are also contested and negotiated. This analysis appears to confirm Durkheim's proposition, duly amended, that national life is made possible only by a vast collective symbolism.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS AND COMPARISONS

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The aim of this thesis has been to shed light on the importance of national symbolism in the processes of building and maintaining nations and national identities, a neglected field within the Social Sciences. The development, character and nature of national symbolism in Europe as a whole have been examined, as well as the three case studies of Britain, France and Norway. Two overall research questions have been chosen with the existing empirical limitations in mind: What is the rôle of national symbols and ceremonies in the formation of nations and national identities? To what extent do national symbols and ceremonies contribute to the maintenance of nations and to the expressions of nationhood? On the basis of these questions, the following hypotheses were offered:

- National symbols and ceremonies express deeper aspects and meanings of the nation.
- National symbols and ceremonies provide comfort and anchorage in an ever-changing world.
- National symbols and ceremonies have an effect upon the community they represent; that is, they raise collective consciousness of 'who we are' and 'where we are from'.
- National symbols and ceremonies vary in age because the nations they represent vary in 'age', the latter being a function of national independence and continuity.

The application of the hypotheses, and the relationship between these, will now be considered and the findings presented in relation to a) the main research questions; b) the symbolism of the European nations; c) the cases studies of Britain, France and Norway; d) their implication for theory. The latter is particularly relevant in the case of the latter two hypotheses.

## 6.1 Expressions of Nationhood

In order to understand how national symbols and ceremonies express the deeper aspects and meanings of the nation, the relationship between national flags, national days and the community they represent were examined. The aim was to demonstrate that the national flag and the national day, as two main images of nationhood, mirror the nation, and that we can grasp the 'nation-ness' of nations through these.

National flags were identified as the main political symbols that have represented various peoples and groups throughout history in a concise and dramatic form. However, with the emergence of the modern nation, they started to express a more complex notion of the community: its presence, unity, glory, beliefs and aspirations. National flags were also established as prime symbols of national self-expression that lay down claims to sovereignty and to a rightfully inherited land. The flag has continued to be the prerequisite for official national ceremonies and for representational purposes in a national as well as international context.

That the national flag is regulated and protected by law against violations further speaks of the close 'relationship' that exists between the flag and the nation it represents. This turns national flags into powerful double-edged political instruments, a political tool also for the people. Flags are burned, defaced, hung upside down or extra symbols are added to them, in order to insult and protest against national authority. The main point is that an insult to the flag has a transcendent meaning as an insult to the nation.

With the evidence presented about the national flags of Europe in mind, it was demonstrated that they constitute short cuts to the nation-building process in terms of expressing national history in graphic form. They thereby establish a link to the past that justifies the existence of the nation. The major changes in the development and symbolism of European flags are connected to revolutions (France), formation of unions (Switzerland, Britain), transformations from monarchies to republics (Netherlands, France, Italy, Russia) and vice versa (France 1814, Italy 1861), the communist domination (of the Baltic States and those of Central and Eastern Europe) and anti-communist transformations (with removal of communist symbols), and fascist (Italy and Germany and their satellite states during World War Two) and anti-fascist transformations (with national flags re-adopted).<sup>1</sup>

A similar pattern is to be found with regard to the national days of Europe, which have also been adapted to political change in order to express new notions of nationhood. Moreover, during occupations (such as the Nazi take-over) national days were outlawed, and domineering powers (such as the Soviet Union) often enforced or introduced new commemorations. Most European national days are celebrated in honour of the founding moment of the nation. Two main types of ceremonial foci were established: national personifications (saints, monarchs and heroes with reference to a 'Golden Age') and political events (establishment of a Republic, union, sovereignty, constitution, liberation and independence).

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<sup>1</sup> A few flags stand out as crucial political symbols with a rallying capacity such as the French Tricolour, the Swastika Flag and the Red Flag.

In short, changes in national symbolism take place when the associations between the symbols and the nation are challenged and re-negotiated. The final products with reference to flag design and colours which express distinctiveness and affiliation to certain values and countries or, as regards which national event to honour above others, have in a number of cases been accepted only after domestic disunity, civil wars or struggles against oppressive powers. The ongoing symbolic battles have further established national flags and national days as crucial national symbols.

National symbols and national ceremonies constitute significant expressions of nationhood and are at the very core of the nation formation process. This was demonstrated in various chapters with regard to European nations in general, but also, in the case studies of Britain, France and Norway. Three different paths to nationhood were found in these cases, expressing, as a result, different circumstances in which their national flags and national days were adopted. In the case of Britain, the formation of the Union in 1801 was reflected in the final combination of the symbolism of the 'old' Cross Flags of England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The national day, Remembrance Sunday is centered around the Cenotaph and the Unknown Soldier's tomb through which the British war dead are remembered. This day has taken on the character of a national funeral, expressing a similarity in ceremonial form to a Christian funeral, in which the nation has taken the place of a family in mourning. It is worth pointing out that in a time of devolution the different nations within Britain express a sense of unity in the mourning of and gratitude to the dead. Although consisting of several nations, Britain may be argued, in terms of its symbolic and ceremonial



expression (especially in the commemorations of Remembrance Sunday), to possess a national 'quality'. France, on the contrary, broke with its Royal pre-Republican symbolism in adopting the Tricolour reflecting the ideals of the new Republic – liberty, brotherhood and equality – although it was continuously challenged in the decades following the Revolution. It was to take a century before the various political groupings (republicans, conservatives etc.) agreed on Bastille Day as a day of the nation, because of their different political agendas and the violent reality of the Revolution. Today, national memory has been re-negotiated to such an extent that Bastille Day has been drained of its associations with the Revolution and constitutes instead the Day of the Republic and *La France*. In Norway, the struggle for independence from Sweden, and for recognition of the Norwegian flag were two simultaneous processes. The struggle for freedom extended into the celebrations on Constitution Day, in honour of the Norwegian constitution that had been adopted before sovereignty had been attained. This day became an effective forum early on in expressing the identity of the budding nation, as well as disagreements within it, and its resistance to foreign domination.

In brief, national symbols and ceremonies express the notion of an inclusive nation to all the members of the community, as opposed to earlier dynastic or monarchical symbolism. This is one reason why symbols and ceremonies are able to kindle love and devotion as they express 'nationhood', that is, the deeper meanings of the nation.

## 6.2 Anchors of the Community

This brings us to the issue of why national symbols and ceremonies can provide comfort and anchorage in an ever-changing world. National symbols and ceremonies are channels through which collective meaning is created, and they provide a direct link to a fund of national memories and associations which serve as a bulwark of security. In general terms they are short-cuts to the nation through which nationals access the security which they provide. National symbols and ceremonies furnish, in their form, a symbolic and ceremonial structure similar to that of religious communities. Due to their persistence over time, they constitute a source of comfort in times of loss and change.

The liturgy and ceremonial forms of nationalism have, in this context, been compared to those of religious communities.<sup>2</sup> National ceremonies owe much in their forms to religious ceremonies, and national ‘sanctification’ plays a key role as it symbolizes the urge to transform the political into the ‘sacred’ sphere. Several examples have been provided throughout this thesis of how the nation sanctifies itself through its symbols and ceremonies, since these are set apart from everyday life. The significance of national flags, worshipped as ‘sacred’ objects in ceremonies and on national days, has also been highlighted. Examples of this are ceremonies relating to the national flag, such as official flag days, flags flown at half-mast, the presentation of colours, flags on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, flags waved on national days. National symbols such as flags, anthems, monuments and the capital city centre are integral elements of national day celebrations or commemorations, and they highlight the nation in various

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<sup>2</sup> Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars Through the Third Reich*. 1975

ways. The national flags are also protected by laws and the national days are declared public holidays.

National symbols and ceremonies have been argued to form an essential part of a 'secular' religion for the reasons given above. However, this is not to say that a religious vacuum existed, as assumed by Mosse.<sup>3</sup> It may be noted that the cross flags of Britain and the Scandinavian countries originally adopted religious symbolism, and some European national ceremonies still coexist with religious celebrations that have come to be integrated under the umbrella of the 'national day'. The 'national day' is by definition territorial as opposed to religious festivities which are trans-territorial. The general decline of organized Christianity in Europe (in terms of power, beliefs and practices), suggests that more room was provided for new ceremonial forms such as territorial days. This means that religious and national ceremonial structures could also be fused and national holidays sanctified (Remembrance Sunday), and that old religious traditions could be nationalized as in Greece, Spain, Ireland and Hungary.

Another aspect of the sanctification of national life, in terms of its ceremonial forms, is that national days are repeated 'myth-symbol complexes' in which the existence of the nation is annually justified and confirmed. Thus, in times of change the ceremonial forms remain the same and continue to justify the actions of the nation. National symbols and ceremonies are also at the forefront of the battle for nation- and statehood, from which nationals can draw strength. In these struggles, they serve as an externalisation of fears and hopes.

The sanctification of national symbols and the popularity of national ceremonies reflect thereby the desire for immortality through posterity after the waning of old religious beliefs in modern society.<sup>4</sup> National ceremonies are adopted in order to remember the war dead (Britain and Belgium) or to celebrate victory (Russia) as a way of glorifying and justifying the nation's morality, values and righteousness. This may provide a unifying focus in countries with different national groups or in those characterized by political instability.

A counter case was provided in this context. The history of national days and the many alterations of the national flag in Germany, demonstrated that the German path towards nationhood has been characterised by rupture and discontinuity. This manifested itself in an ambivalent notion of nationhood, especially after World War Two. The symbolic expressions of nationhood are therefore limited, and as a result, Unification Day, established in 1990, constitutes mainly a celebration for and with the state elites. As discussed, Germany has turned towards 'Europe', which has provided a channel towards and a focus for a 'new' history and identity.

National symbols and ceremonies, in their reference to the nation, create and clarify boundaries between what constitutes 'us' and 'them', and signal a message of inclusion to its members that simultaneously excludes non-members.<sup>5</sup> In times of wars and conflicts, the role played by symbols and ceremonies in the process of boundary-making is particularly significant. The evidence put forward to this effect was the

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<sup>3</sup> Mosse, 1975

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity*. 2003

<sup>5</sup> Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. 1995; Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism*. 1982

heightened awareness of communal symbolism and ceremonials demonstrated in times of instability, such as wars, struggles for independence, change of political regime, illustrated by the data presented in the tables on 'modern' and 'new' national flags and national days.

National days are ceremonies in which a sense of nationhood is expressed, re-established and reinforced. Bastille Day in France was celebrated by the republicans in 1790 but as a national holiday it was officially instituted ninety years later. The extensive celebrations take place in the national centre of Paris with a military parade, but also in the communities around France. The celebrations of Norwegian-ness from 1821 onwards on Constitution Day helped create, reinforce and express a national identity suppressed in the Union with Sweden. In Britain, Remembrance Sunday provides a framework within which the sacrifices of the past are commemorated in the present and have come to include all the British war dead. Although the character of these days is dramatically different, popular participation is evident. The nationals meet and engage in this way within a recurrent ceremonial pattern, which links them with previous as well as future generations. The persistence of national celebrations and commemorations demonstrates that these national practices, despite change or loss, provide some kind of comfort in that they remain constant in form and content.

### **6.3 Awareness and Collective Consciousness**

National symbols and ceremonies have an effect upon the community they represent, in that they raise collective consciousness of 'who we are' and 'where we are from'. It is

the taken-for-granted character of symbols and ceremonies, often looked upon as superficial or decorative, that turn them into what one may call ‘under-cover’ agents of influence. We have seen throughout this thesis that national symbols are ‘in action’ and national ceremonies are experiences in symbolic form. This means that they contribute to the formation of nations and national identity in that they shape, maintain and reproduce the nation. The use of distinct symbolism and the celebration of specific national days raise awareness of ‘who we are’, in relation to ‘us’ as well as to ‘others’. The nature of national symbols and ceremonies allows them to symbolize unity without compromising individual beliefs and thereby allows for private associations of nationhood.

National symbols and ceremonies are community-oriented in their references, associations and usage, and thereby constitute signs of belonging. This is the prime reason why they are able to provoke an emotional involvement. However, whether they also create solidarity, unity and cohesion, as argued by Durkheim, is another matter. Durkheim<sup>6</sup> maintained that societies become united through rituals bringing about feelings of exaltation and enthusiasm, which were carried over into daily life. It is in this way that consensus or conformity about social taboos and values comes into existence.<sup>7</sup> On the contrary, it has been argued here that national symbols and ceremonies do not necessarily produce cohesion or a sense of togetherness, as demonstrated in the case of Germany, where it appeared that symbols and ceremonies as such are not determining factors. The main element of successful ceremonies is

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<sup>6</sup> Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. 1976

whether or not they represent something which people endorse. Germany is not the only example of this; other nations may not have a popular national day but have, as a rule, another event in which collective identity is expressed (Poland, Croatia, Russia). The national days above stand in contrast to the 'old' commemorations (Ireland, Hungary, Spain) and also to the 'modern' celebrations (France, Norway, Greece and the Netherlands), that demonstrate continuity as well as popularity in their officially established national days.

National day ceremonies are mainly self-celebrations in honour of 'who we are'. The trend of preserving ceremonies, as well as producing new ones, reveals the intention to create cohesion and unity. Nevertheless, symbols and ceremonies without popular support will have little effect. Popular support and participation, in turn, are functions of whether or not they strike a chord with members of the community.

As signs of belonging, symbols and ceremonies act as inclusive and divisive forces, which make them raise awareness of community boundaries. Illuminating examples of how such symbols are used in ceremonies include the parading of flags and regalia from other peoples in proof of conquest and success, as in the 1945 Moscow Victory Parade or in the contemporary military parade on Bastille Day – enhancing not only the difference between 'us' and 'them', but also, the glorification of the nation as a military power.

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<sup>7</sup> However, nations include larger and highly divided populations (in terms of class, religion, ethnicity, region, and age) compared to the smaller societies studied by Durkheim.

It is the self-referential quality of national symbols that makes them powerful, compared to other forms of symbolism. The ritual contexts in which national symbols are displayed are experiences in symbolic form and often have a 'religious' structure, in which the flag constitutes an object of worship. Nationals are thus able to draw strength from the flag, which serves as an externalisation of their fears and hopes, and can inspire love of the country and respect for traditions. In this way, the national flag possesses a quality of special reserve as it represents the community in its broadest form – its past, present and future – and communicates a message of belonging.

In other words, national symbols and ceremonies serve as convenient means of analysing the creation and maintenance of national identities. They facilitate social life by contributing to the formations of nations since they reinforce social values. As symbols and ceremonies are imbued with meaning they may also be contested and negotiated. The analysis presented here confirms Durkheim's proposition, duly amended, that national life is created through collective symbolism.

#### **6.4 The Symbolic Regimes of Europe**

Finally, we turn to the last hypothesis tested in this thesis that national symbols and ceremonies vary in age because the nations they represent vary in 'age', the latter being a function of national independence and continuity. In order to apply this argument, the categories of 'old', 'modern' and 'new' need to be examined in relation to a cross-analysis of the European national flags and national days.



Nations cannot be dated in a precise manner. However, if we accept that national symbols and ceremonies are expressions of nationhood, the implication of this is that the dates of adoption of the main national symbols and ceremonies – the flags and national days – have something to say about the approximate time when nations start to express themselves symbolically in their present form. Three specific periods were used as pivots for categorisation in terms of ‘old’ referring to the pre-modern period to 1789, ‘modern’ from 1789 to 1913, and ‘new’ appearing from 1914 to today.<sup>8</sup>

The evidence submitted in this thesis shows several trends. Firstly, three main types of flags were identified and linked to the three regimes with Cross flags as ‘old’, Tricolours originating in the ‘modern’ period and Heraldic flags being primarily ‘new’ flags. The ‘old’ flags stand in contrast to the ‘new’ flags, which through the use of old heraldic colours, coats of arms or pre-existing symbolism assert the right of nations to exist as independent communities, such as in the cases of Austria, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Wales, Croatia, and Slovenia<sup>9</sup>. The evidence demonstrates that symbolism may be used to justify the existence of relatively new nations, such as in the cross flags of Norway and Iceland chosen to express ‘distinctiveness’ as well as affiliation with the Scandinavian countries.

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<sup>8</sup> Further investigation needs to be made as to whether certain national characteristics, such as a parliamentary system and social hierarchies can be connected to the symbolic origins of the different regimes. Perhaps such an investigation may account for the origins of the ‘old’ symbolic regime in terms of dynastic, aristocratic and religious influences, and those of the ‘modern’ symbolic regime as bourgeois and civic in nature. Finally, the national narratives of the ‘new’ symbolic regime may be of a more popular, folkish and ethnic character.

<sup>9</sup> The flags of Albania, Ukraine, Moldova, and FYROM (Macedonia) also belong to this category.

Secondly, in the case of the national ceremonies two main types of national days were identified and showed that those in honour of national personifications or a golden age are 'old', whereas those commemorating a political event by definition are 'modern' or 'new'. The European national days are also public holidays with the exception of Remembrance Sunday which is celebrated on a Sunday. The majority of national days are civilian although the military still constitutes a central part in some celebrations. The general trend suggests that military significance has somewhat decreased.

Thirdly, by adding the national day to the analysis of the national flag, various layers of the national 'myth-symbol-complex' can be uncovered. As a general rule, national flags appear before national days. Flags were in use early and led into battle, as symbols of both identification and differentiation. Adopted in their national form, flags illustrate a growing consciousness of people wishing to symbolize themselves to others, and as national symbols they are an older stratum of the nation, whereas the 'national day' appears in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The exceptions are those national days with a preceding religious celebration later combined with or transformed into the national day (Ireland and Hungary), celebrations in honour of a national hero (Portugal) or of an earlier period of state formation or independence (Poland).

The table below lists the nations in accordance with the appearance of the national flag as the first 'national' symbol and an indicator of national assertion and awareness.

**Table 6-1: The Symbolic Regimes of Europe**

**NATIONAL SYMBOLISM IN EUROPE**

<b>NATION</b>	<b>NATIONAL FLAG</b>	<b>NATIONAL DAY</b>	<b>SYMBOLIC REGIME</b>
Denmark	1340	1849	Old (Modern)
Switzerland	1480	1891	Old (Modern)
Sweden	1523	1893	Old (Modern)
Britain	1606 (-1801)	1919	Old (New)
Netherlands	1630	1891	Old (Modern)
Russia	1699	2004	Old (New)
Spain	1785	1480	Old
France	1789	1790	Modern
Belgium	1831	1890	Modern
Greece	1833	1838	Modern
Italy	1848	1947	Modern (New)
Germany	1848	1990	Modern (New)
Hungary	1848	1100-	Modern (Old )
Finland	1863-63	1917	Modern (New)
Romania	1867	1989	Modern (New)
Bulgaria	1878-79	1888	Modern
Norway	1905 (1821)	1905 (1827)	Modern
Portugal	1910	1595	Modern (Old)
Ireland	1916	11 <sup>th</sup> c.	New (Old)
Austria	1918	1955	Modern
Poland	1918	1790	New (Modern)
Lithuania	1918	1918	New
Estonia	1918	1918	New
Latvia	1918	1918	New
Iceland	1918	1945	New
Czech Republic	1920	1919	New
Croatia	1990	2003	New
Slovenia	1991	1991	New
Slovakia	1992	1992	New

The final column ‘Symbolic Regime’ in the table above identifies the regimes during which the nations have been created and re-created. The first Symbolic Regime corresponds to the national flag, whereas the second correspond to the national day (if

different from the first). The aim has been to illustrate that, not only is the nation layered, but the creation of the nation is an ongoing and continuous process, and the complexity of the national 'age' can be traced alongside a continuum of symbolic expression. This means that few nations in their present form can claim to be strictly 'old' or 'modern'. The process of identity creation and nationalization is far more complicated. A pattern can be discerned in the last column of the table where the 'symbolic regime' of the nation's symbolism is clarified. The ongoing creation of identity can be traced in the cases of Britain and Russia, which have 'old' flags but 'new' national days. The Netherlands displays an 'old' flag and celebrates a 'modern' national day, whereas Italy and Germany have 'modern' flags and 'new' national days. Poland's symbols, due to its political ruptures and struggle towards independence, comprise a 'new' flag but a 'modern' national day, whereas Portugal's flag is 'modern' and the national day is 'old', and Ireland's flag is 'new' and the national day 'old'. The considerable complexity with regard to the nation building is also expressed in that the 'old' flags of Denmark and Spain were adopted centuries apart, and the 'new' national days of Britain and Russia were introduced eighty-five years apart. Having said this, some cases such as the Baltic States and the Central and Eastern European states, stand in contrast to those many other countries whose national symbols are taken for granted and do not to the same extent provoke politically controversial issues.

Finally, the implications for theories of nationalism need to be considered. In brief, the conclusions of this study justify both the ethno-symbolist and the modernist (Hobsbawmian) positions.

Whereas flags are usually older than national days, the latter appear closer to the period of the mass-production of ‘invented traditions’ (1870-1914). The majority appear from the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, in the age of nationalism when the national communities began to celebrate their ideals and distinctiveness just like religious communities of the past. Out of the thirty-three national days accounted for in Chapter Four, twelve are older than 1870, six appear during 1870-1914, and fifteen are introduced after 1914, which supports Hobsbawm’s argument that a new tradition had been invented. However, if we look closely at the national days established during 1870-1914, we find that they are not arbitrarily chosen; on the contrary, national days were selected to honour a major national event. In France, Bastille Day had been celebrated by the Republicans in 1790, and although not officially adopted until 1880, it constituted the defining moment for the new Republic. In Norway the celebrations of Constitution Day were in place from 1827 onwards precisely because the Norwegian Constitution was threatened in the union with Sweden. There was also already a tradition in place in Britain to commemorate the dead in battle, although the elites, in the case of Remembrance Sunday, had a lot to gain by trying to unify the people in the wake of the losses of the country. Generally speaking, national days came to provide a further layer around the national community, adding to it national fervour in a context of the general political instability characterising Europe during the decades before World War One. However, the conceptual framework of ‘invented tradition’ cannot explain the success of these ceremonies.

On the other hand, the ethno-symbolist perspective enables us better to understand the appearance of the 'old' European flags. The first Cross flags (Denmark, Sweden, England, Scotland, and Switzerland) survived from the medieval into the modern period. Their early existence indicates that some form of pre-modern loyalties existed, and their development into national flags symbolises the transformation of these loyalties into national ones. Due to their early existence, these flags cannot be categorised as 'inventions'. 'Invented' tradition may be a term appropriate for the age of mass-politics, but not really applicable to the development of traditions and symbols in earlier periods. As regards the cases of Northern and Western Europe (with the exception of Iceland and Germany) an ethno-symbolist *long-durée* approach explains better the persistence of symbols, such as flags, over centuries. In Central and Eastern Europe a modernist framework is more useful, with the exceptions of Russia and Hungary which display both 'old' and 'new' symbolism.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, both approaches to nationalism offer understandings of the complex material presented in this thesis. However, in terms of the validity of these perspectives it must be emphasized that the nation building process cannot be understood unless the 'old', 'modern' and 'new' periods are all accounted for. Nations are discovered and re-discovered, created and re-created, constructed and re-constructed, invented and re-invented. In other words, the main theories of nationalism need to be integrated in order to offer a fuller explanation. It is precisely because national symbols and ceremonies express distinctiveness and nationhood that they can be used as political tools. As seen in the evidence presented throughout this thesis, the past is an integral part of the

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<sup>10</sup> Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. 1986

present, and if national symbols and ceremonies are perceived as ‘real’, they are real in their consequences.

This thesis has aimed to contribute to the theories of symbolism in general, and of national symbolism in particular, by highlighting the important role fulfilled by national symbols and ceremonies in the formation of nations and national identities. Moreover, evidence has been submitted to the effect that national symbols and ceremonies contribute to the maintenance of nations.

The development of different symbolic regimes has also been underlined in the emergence and maintenance of nations and national identities. The patterns of the symbolism and ceremonial forms of the European nations have been explored, showing how Western and Northern Europe, as a whole, has developed earlier than Central and Eastern Europe. No consistent pattern as such is to be found as regards Southern Europe.

National symbols are of particular importance in the context of national ceremonies, in which they are used to create emotionally charged moments. Moreover, national day ceremonies are repeated annually, which renews a sense of national identity among the members of the nations. Hence the durability of the symbolic regimes which may mirror the widespread need for collective belonging, even in what many would consider a materialistic and secular age.

In other words, this thesis has sought to draw attention to the complexity of the nation building process, which of necessity requires an encompassing theoretical framework, illustrated by this analysis which supports the significance of ethnic roots associated with myths and memories as well as the idea of invented traditions.



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## APPENDIX 2

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