A Nation Is a Nation, Is a State, Is an Ethnic Group, Is a . . .

Walker Connor

Why is the key institution of global governance and international diplomacy called the United Nations when membership is based on statehood? As Walker Connor explains in this selection, although the terms nation and state are often used almost interchangeably, there are important differences between the two concepts. In fact, the term nation-state (what in common usage is called a country) can be highly misleading, for it implies that citizens share a sense of common national identity. A one-to-one correspondence between a nation or people and the exclusive political organization of a given territory by a state is usually considered the best way to divide the world into stable units. Yet Connor observes that nation-states (where there is a one-to-one correspondence of the two) are very much the exception. Forty years ago, scholars thought that no more than 10 percent of states could properly be called nation-states. Today, in this era of immigration and cultural diffusion, even that figure is probably on the high side. It is difficult to think of any pure cases of a culturally, ethnically, and linguistically homogeneous people (the nation) corresponding perfectly to the sovereign territory of political control (the state).

One of the most common manifestations of terminological license is the intermixing of the words state and nation. This tendency is perplexing because at one level of consciousness most scholars are clearly well aware of the vital distinctions between the two concepts. The state is the major political subdivision of the globe. As such, it is readily defined and, what is of greater moment to the present discussion, is easily conceptualized in quantitative terms. Peru, for illustration, can be defined in an easily conceptualized manner as the territorial-political unit consisting of the sixteen million inhabitants of the 514,060 square miles located on the west coast of South America between 69° and 80° West, and 2° and 18°, 21° South.

Defining and conceptualizing the nation is much more difficult because the essence of a nation is intangible. This essence is a psychological bond that joins

a people and differentiates it, in the subconscious conviction of its members, from all other people in a most vital way. The nature of that bond and its wellspring remain shadowy and elusive, and the consequent difficulty of defining the nation is usually acknowledged by those who attempt this task. Thus, a popular dictionary of International Relations defines a nation as follows:

A social group which shares a common ideology, common institutions and customs, and a sense of homogeneity. "Nation" is difficult to define so precisely as to differentiate the term from such other groups as religious sects, which exhibit some of the same characteristics. In the nation, however, there is also present a strong group sense of belonging associated with a particular territory considered to be peculiarly its own.

Whereas the key word in this particular definition is sense, other authorities may substitute feeling or intuition, but proper appreciation of the abstract essence of the nation is customary in definitions. But after focusing attention upon that essential psychological bond, little probing of its nature follows. Indeed, having defined the nation as an essentially psychological phenomenon, authorities [...] then regularly proceed to treat it as fully synonymous with the very different and totally tangible concept of the state.

Even when one restricts nation to its proper, non-political meaning of a human collectivity, the ambiguity surrounding its nature is not thereby evaporated. How does one differentiate the nation from other human collectivities? The above cited definition spoke of "a sense of homogeneity." Others speak of a feeling of sameness, of oneness, of belonging, or of consciousness of kind. But all such definitions appear a bit timid, and thereby fail to distinguish the nation from numerous other types of groups. Thus, one can conceive of the Amish, Appalachian hill people, or "down Mainers" as all fitting rather neatly within any of the preceding standards.

With but very few exceptions, authorities have shied away from describing the nation as a kinship group and have usually explicitly denied that the notion of shared blood is a factor. Such denials are supported by data illustrating that most groups claiming nationhood do in fact incorporate several genetic strains. But such an approach ignores the wisdom of the old saw that when analysing sociopolitical situations, what ultimately matters is not what but who people believe is. And a subconscious belief in the group's separate origin and evolution is an important ingredient of national psychology. When one avers that he is Chinese, he is identifying himself not just with the Chinese people and culture of today, but with the Chinese people and their activities throughout time. The Chinese Communist Party was appealing to just such a sense of separate origin and evolution in 1937:

[We know that in order to transform the glorious future into a new China, independent, free, and happy, all our fellow countrymen, every single, zealous descendant of Huang-di (the legendary first emperor of China) must determinedly and relentlessly participate in the concerted struggle.

... Our great Chinese nation, with its long history, is incomparable.
Bismarck's famous exhortation to the German people, over the heads of their particular political leaders, to "think with your blood" was a similar attempt to activate a mass psychological vibration predicated upon an intuitive sense of consanguinity. An unstated presumption of a Chinese (or German) nation is that there existed in some hazy, prehistoric era a Chinese (or German) Adam and Eve, and that the couple's progeny has evolved in essentially unadulterated form down to the present. It was recognition of this dimension of the nation that caused numerous writers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to employ race as a synonym for nation, references to a German race or to the English race being quite common.

Since the nation is a self-defined rather than an other-defined grouping, the broadly held conviction concerning the group's singular origin need not and seldom will accord with factual data. Thus, the anthropologist may prove to his own satisfaction that there are several genetic strains within the Pushtun people who populate the Afghani-Pakistani border-region and conclude therefrom that the group represents the variegated offspring of several peoples who have moved through the region. The important fact, however, is that the Pushtuns themselves are convinced that all Pushtuns are evolved from a single source and have remained essentially unadulterated. This is a matter which is known intuitively and unquestioningly, a matter of attitude and not of fact. It is a matter, the underlying conviction of which is not apt to be disturbed substantially even by the rational acceptance of anthropological or other evidence to the contrary. Depending upon the sophistication of the treatise, this type of sensory knowledge may be described as "a priori," "an emotional rather than a rational conviction," "primordial," "thinking with the heart (or with the blood) rather than with the mind," or a 'gur' or 'knee-jerk' response." Regardless of the nomenclature, it is an extremely important adjunct of the national idea. It is the intuitive conviction which can give to nations a psychological dimension approximating that of the extended family, i.e. a feeling of common blood lineage.

The word nation comes from the Latin and, when first coined, clearly conveyed the idea of common blood ties. It was derived from the past participle of the verb nasci, meaning to be born. And hence the Latin noun, nationem, connoting breed or race. Unfortunately, terms used to describe human collectivities (terms such as race and class) invite an unusual degree of literary license, and nation certainly proved to be no exception. Thus, at some medieval universities, a student's nationem designated the sector of the country from whence he came. But when introduced into the English language in the late thirteenth century, it was with its primary connotation of a blood related group. One etymologist notes, however, that by the early seventeenth century, nation was also being used to describe the inhabitants of a country, regardless of that population's ethnorousanational composition, thereby becoming a substitute for less specific human categories such as the people or the citizenry. This inculcitous practice continues to the present day, and accounts for often encountered references to the American citizenry as the American nation. Whatever the American people are (and they may well be
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Far more detrimental to the study of nationalism, however, has been the propensity to employ the term nation as a substitute for that territorial juridical unit, the state. How this practice developed is unclear, though it seems to have become a relatively common practice in the late seventeenth century. Two possible explanations for this development present themselves. One involves the rapid spread of the doctrine of popular sovereignty that was precipitated about this time by the writings of men such as Locke. In identifying the people as the font of all political power, this revolutionary doctrine made the people and the state almost synonymous. L’état c’est moi became l’état c’est le peuple. And therefore the nation and the state had become near synonyms, for we have already noted the tendency to equate nation with the entire people or citizenry. Thus, the French Declaration of Rights of Man and Citizen would proclaim that the source of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation; no group, no individual may exercise authority not emanating expressly therefrom. Though the drafters of the Declaration may not have been aware, "the nation" to which they referred contained Alsatians, Basques, Bretons, Catalans, Corsicans, Flemings, and Occitanians, as well as Frenchmen.

It is also probable that the habit of renaturalizing nation and state developed as alternative abbreviations for the expression nation-state. The very coming of this hyphenate illustrated an appreciation of the vital differences between nation and state. It was designed to describe a territorial-political unit (a state) whose borders coincided or nearly coincided with the territorial distribution of a national group. More concisely, it described a situation in which a nation had its own state. Unfortunately, however, nation-state has come to be applied indiscriminately to all states. Thus one authority has stated that "a prime fact about the world is that it is largely composed of nation-states." The statement should read that "a prime fact about the world is that it is not largely composed of nation-states." A survey of the 132 entities generally considered to be states as of 1971, produced the following breakdown:

1. Only 12 states (9.1%) can justifiably be described as nation-states.
2. Twenty-five (18.9%) contain a nation or potential nation accounting for more than 50% of the state’s total population but also contain an important minority.
3. Another 25 (18.9%) contain a nation or potential nation accounting for between 75% and 89% of the population.
4. In 31 (23.3%), the largest ethnic element accounts for 50% to 74% of the population.
5. In 39 (29.5%), the largest nation or potential nation accounts for less than half of the population.

Were all states nation-states, no great harm would result from referring to them as nations, and people who insisted that the distinction between nation and state be maintained could be dismissed as linguistic purists or semantic nitpickers. Where nation and state essentially coincide, their verbal interutilization is inconsequential because the two are indistinguishably merged in popular perception. The state is perceived as the political extension of the nation, and appeals to one trigger the identical, positive psychological responses as appeals to the other. To ask a Japanese kamikaze pilot or a bazooka-shoot participant whether he was about to die for Nippon or for the Japanese people would be an incomprehensible query since the two blurred into an inseparable whole. Hitler could variously make his appeals to the German people in the name of state (Deutsches Reich), nation (Volkdeutsch), or homeland (Deutschland), because all triggered the same emotional associations. Similar responses can be elicited from members of a nation that is clearly predominant within a state. But the invoking of such symbols has quite a different impact upon minorities. Thus, “Mother Russia” evokes one type of response from a Russian and something quite different from a Ukrainian. De Gaulle’s emotional evocations of La France met quite different audiences within the Ile de France and within Brittany or Corsica.

Whatever the original reason for the interutilization of nation and state, even the briefest reflection suffices to establish the all-pervasive effect that this careless use of terminology has had upon the intellectual-cultural milieu within which the study of nationalism is pursued. The League of Nations and the United Nations are obvious misnomers. The discipline called International Relations should be designated Interstate Relations. One listing of contemporary organizations contains sixty-six entries beginning with the word international (e.g. the International Court of Justice and the International Monetary Fund), none of which, either in its membership or in its function, reflects any relationship to nations. International Law and International Organization are still other significant illustrations of the common but improper tendency to equate state and nation. National income, national wealth, national interest, and the like, refer in fact to state concerns. A recently coined malapropism, transnational (and even transnationalism) is used to describe interstate, extragovernmental relations. Naturalization is still another of the numerous misnomers that muddy understanding of the national phenomenon.

With the concepts of the nation and the state thus hopelessly confused, it is perhaps not too surprising that nationalism should come to mean identification with the state rather than loyalty to the nation. Even the same International
relations dictionary whose definition of the nation we cited for its proper appreciation of the psychological essence of the nation, makes this error. After carefully noting that "a nation may comprise part of a state, or extend beyond the borders of a single state," it elsewhere says of nationalism that "it makes the state the ultimate focus of the individual's loyalty." It also says of nationalism that "as a mass emotion it is the most powerful political force operative in the world." Few would disagree with this assessment of the power of nationalism, and this is precisely the problem. Impressed with the force of nationalism, and assuming it to be in the service of the state, the scholars of political development have been pre-programmed to assume that the new states of Africa and Asia would naturally become the focus of their inhabitants' loyalties. Nationalism, here as elsewhere, would prove irresistible, and alternative foci of loyalty would therefore lose the competition to that political structure alternatively called the nation, the state, or the nation-state. This syndrome of assumptions and terminological confusion which has generally characterized the political development school is reflected in the early self-description of its endeavors as "nation-building." Contrary to its nomenclature, the "nation-building" school has in fact been dedicated to building viable states. And with a few exceptions, the greatest barrier to state unity has been the fact that the states each contain more than one nation, and sometimes hundreds. Yet, a review of the literature will uncover little reflection on how the psychological bonds that presently tie segments of the state's population are to be destroyed. One searches the literature in vain, for techniques by which group-identification is correlated with loyalty to a state-structure, whose population has never shared such common feelings. The nature and power of these abstract ties that identify the true nation remain almost unmentioned, to say nothing of unprobed. The assumption that the powerful force called nationalism is in the service of the state makes the difficult investigation of such abstractions unnecessary.

As in the case of substituting the word nation for state, it is difficult to pinpoint the origin of the tendency to equate nationalism with loyalty to the state. It is unquestionably a very recent development, for the word nationalism is itself of very recent creation. G. de Rerier de Sauvigny believes it first appeared in literature in 1798 and did not reappear until 1838. Moreover, its absence from lexicographies until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suggests that its use was not extensive until much more recently. Furthermore, all of the examples of its early use convey the idea of identification not with the state, but with the nation as properly understood. While unable to pinpoint nationalism's subsequent association with the state, it indubitably followed and flowed from the tendency to equate state and nation. It also unquestionably received a strong impetus from the great body of literature occasioned by the growth of militarism in Germany and Japan during the 1930s and early 1940s.

As outstanding illustrations of the fanatical responses that nationalism engender, German and Japanese nationalism of this period have come to occupy an important place in all subsequent scholarship on nationalism. And,
Unfortunately, these manifestations of extreme nationalism have been firmly identified with the loyalty to the state. The most common word applied to them has been fascism, a doctrine postulating unquestioning obedience to an organic, corporate state. The most popular alternative descriptive phrase, totalitarianism, perhaps even more strongly conveys the idea of the complete (total) identification of the individual with the state.

The linking of the state to these examples by excellence of extreme nationalism suggests the likelihood that other states will also become the object of mass devotion. If some states could elicit such fanatical devotion, why not others? Granted, few would wish to see such extreme and perverted dedication to the state arise elsewhere. But if the concept of a Japanese state could, during World War II, motivate “bomber runners,” kamikaze missions, and numerous decisions of suicide rather than surrender (as well as the many post-war illustrations of people enduring for years an animal-like existence in caves on Pacific islands) because of a loyalty to the Japanese state that was so unassailable as to place that state’s defeat beyond comprehension, then surely the states of the Third World should at least be able to evoke a sufficiently strong loyalty from their inhabitants so as to prevail against any competing group-allegiances. If a loyalty to a German state could motivate Germans to carry on a war long after it became evident that the cause was hopeless and that perseverance could only entail more deprivation, destruction, and death, then surely other states could at least elicit a sense of common cause and identity from their populations that would prove more powerful than any counter-tendencies to draw distinctions among segments of the populace. If the German and Japanese experiences were pertinent elsewhere, then optimism concerning the stability of present state structures would be justified.

But what has been too readily ignored is the fact that Germany and Japan were among the handful of states that clearly qualify as nation-states. As earlier noted, in such cases the state and the nation are indistinguishably linked in popular perception. Japan to the Japanese, just as Germany to the Germans, was something far more personal and profound than a territorial-political structure termed a state; it was an embodiment of the nation-idea and therefore an extension of self. As postulated by fascist doctrine, these states were indeed popularly conceived as corporate organisms, for they were equated with the Japanese and German nations. As Hitler wrote in Mein Kampf, “We as Aryans, are therefore able to imagine a State only to be the living organism of a nationality which not only safeguards the preservation of that nationality, but which, by further training of its spiritual and ideal abilities, leads it to its highest freedom.”

But could such an emotion-laden conception of the state take root where the nation and the state were not popularly equated? The single rhetoric of fascism was applied to Hitler’s Germany, Tojo’s Japan, Mussolini’s Italy, Franco’s Spain, and Peron’s Argentina. It is evident, however, that appeals in the name of Spain have not elicited any great emotion from the Basques, Catalans, and Galicians, applicable to all Argentines.

Walker C. Chandler

Ethnicity

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Galinians. In polygenetic Argentina, Peron’s message was not a unifying appeal
to all Argentinians, but was in fact a divisive call in the name of socioeconomic
class. Within Italy, a sense of loyalty to the state proved woefully and surpris-
ingly inadequate in the face of its first major test, the invasion by Allied forces.
The reason appears to be that the concept of a single people (national aware-
ness) has not yet permeated the subconsciousness of the Italians to the state
measure as a similar concept had permeated the German and Japanese people.
In equating nationalism with loyalty to the state, scholars had failed to inquire
how many cases there have been where national devotion to a state has arisen
in the absence of a popular conception of the state as the state of one’s particular
nation. Rather than suggesting certain victories on the part of new states in
the competition for loyalty, the experiences of Germany and Japan exemplify
the potential strength of those emotional ties to one’s nation with which the
multinational state most content. German and Japanese nationalism were more
prophecies auguries of the growth of concepts such as inter alia, Ibo, Bengali,
Kikuyu, Naga, Karen, Lao, Bahasa, Kurdi, and Baganda, than they were auguries
of the growth of concepts such as Nigeria, Pakistan, Kenya, India, Burma,
Thailand, Rwanda, Iraq and Uganda.

Mistakenly equating nationalism with loyalty to the state has further
contributed to terminological confusion by leading to the introduction of still other
confusing terms. With nationalism preempted, authorities have had difficulty
agreement on a term to describe the loyalty of segments of a state’s population to
their particular nation. Ethnicity, primordialism, pluralism, tribalism, regionalism,
communalism, and parochialism are among the most commonly encoun-
tered. This varied vocabulary further impedes an understanding of nationalism
by creating the impression that each is describing a separate phenomenon.
Moreover, retaining nationalism to convey loyalty to the state (or, more commonly,
the word nation when the latter is improperly substituted for state),
while using words with different roots and fundamentally different connotations
to refer to loyalty to the nation, adds immeasurably to the confusion. Each of the
above terms has exercised its own particular negative impact upon the study of
nationalism.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity (identity with one’s ethnic group) is, if anything, more definitively
chameleon-like than nation. It is derived from Eidos, the Greek word for image in
the latter’s pristine sense of a group characterized by common descent. Conso-
nant with this derivation, there developed a general agreement that an ethnic
group referred to a basic human category (i.e., not a subgroup). Unfortunately,
however, American sociologists came to employ ethnic group to refer to “a group
with a common cultural tradition and a sense of identity which exists as a sub-
group of a larger society.” This definition makes ethnic group synonymous with
minority, and, indeed, with regard to group relations within the United States, it has been used in reference to nearly any discernible minority, religious, linguistic, or otherwise.

The definition of ethnic group by American sociologists violates its original meaning with respect to at least two important particulars. In the traditional sense of an ancestrally related unit, it is evident that an ethnic group need not be a subordinate part of a larger political society but may be the dominant element within a state (the Chinese, English, or French, for example) or may extend across several states, as do the Arabs. Secondly, the indiscriminate application of ethnic group to numerous kinds of groups, obscure vital distinctions between various kinds of identity. In a stimulating and often cited introduction to a volume entitled Ethnicity, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, while rejecting the notion that ethnicity refers only to minorities, defended the incorporation of several forms of identity under this single rubric.

Thus, there is some legitimacy to finding that forms of identification based on social realities as different as religion, language, and national origin all have something in common, such that a new term is coined to refer to all of them: "ethnicity." What they have in common is that they have all become effective tools for group mobilization for concrete political ends.

However, despite the usefulness that such a categorization possesses for the study of the politics of special interest groups, there is little question but that it has exerted a damaging influence upon the study of nationalism. One result is that the researcher, when studying through thousands of entries in union catalogs, indices to periodicals, and the like, cannot be sure whether a so-called ethnic study will prove germane to the study of nationalism. Sometimes the unit under examination does constitute a national or potential national group. Other times it is a transnational (inter- or intrastate) group such as the Amerindians. And, in most instances, it is a group related only marginally, if at all, to the nation, as properly understood (e.g., the Catholic community within the Netherlands). Moreover, a review of the indices and bibliographies found in those ethnic studies that do deal with a national or potential national group, illustrate all too often that the author is unaware of the relationship of his work to nationalism. The student of nationalism and the student of ethnicity seldom cross-fertilize. The American journal Ethnicity, and the Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism, for example, are remarkably free of overlap with regard to (1) the academic background of their contributors and (2) footnoted materials.

Even if the author uses the term ethnicity solely in relation to national groups, his equating of nationalism with loyalty to the state will presuppose him to underestimate the comparative magnitude of the former. But the much more common practice of employing ethnicity as a clock for several different kinds of identity exerts a more harmful effect. Such a single grouping presumes that all of the identities are of the same order. We shall reserve further comment on the adverse consequences of this presumption to a later discussion of primordial

and pluralist identifications.

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Anthropologists, ethnologists, and scholars concerned with global comparisons have been more prone to use ethnicity and ethnic group in their pristine sense of involving a sense of common ancestry: Max Weber, for example, noted:

We shall call "ethnic groups" those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent... this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists. Ethnic membership (Gemeinschaft) differs from the kindship group precisely by being a presumed identity....

This definition would appear to equate ethnic group and nation and [...]. Weber did indeed link the two notions. However, elsewhere Weber made an important and useful distinction between the two:

[The idea of the nation is apt to include the notions of common descent and of an essential though frequently indefinite homogeneity. The "nation"] has these notions in common with the sentiment of solidarity of ethnic communities, which is also nourished from various sources, as we have seen before. But the sentiment of ethnic solidarity does not by itself make a "nation." Undoubtedly, even, the White Russians in the face of the Great Russians have always had a sentiment of ethnic solidarity; yet even at the present time they would hardly claim to qualify as a separate "nation." The Poles of Upper Silesia, until recently, had hardly any feeling of solidarity with the "Polish nation." They felt themselves to be a separate ethnic group in the face of the Germans, but for the rest, they were Prussian subjects and nothing else.

Weber is here clearly speaking of pre-national peoples or [...], potential nations. His illustrations are of peoples not yet cognizant of belonging to a larger ethnic element. The group consciousness to which he refers—that rather low level of ethnic solidarity that a segment of the ethnic element feels when confronted with a foreign element—need not be very important politically and comes closer to xenophobia than to nationalism. To the degree that it represents a step in the process of nation-formation, it testifies that a group of people must know ethnically what they are not before they know what they are. Thus, to Weber's illustrations, we can add the Slovaks, Croats, and Slovenes who, under the Habsburg Empire, were aware that they were neither German nor Magyar, long before they possessed positive opinions concerning their ethnic or national identity. In such cases, meaningful identity of a positive nature remains limited to locale, region, clan, or tribe. Thus, members need not be conscious of belonging to the ethnic group. Ernest Barker made this point with regard to all peoples prior to the nineteenth century:

The self-consciousness of nations is a product of the nineteenth century. This is a matter of the first importance. Nations were already there; they had indeed been there for centuries. But it is not the things which are simply "there" that matter in human life. What really and finally matters is the thing which is apprehended as an idea, and, as an
Idea, is vested with emotion until it becomes a cause and a spring of action. In the world of action, apprehended ideas are alone electrical; and a nation must be an idea as well as a fact before it can become a dynamic force.

To refine Barker's wording only slightly, and his meaning not at all, a nation is a self-aware ethnic group. An ethnic group may be readily discerned by an anthropologist or other outsider-observer, but until the members are themselves aware of the group's uniqueness, it is merely an ethnic group and not a nation. While an ethnic group may, therefore, be other-defined, the nation must be self-defined. Employing ethnic group or ethnicity in relationship to several types of identities therefore buckles the relationship between the ethnic group and the nation and also deprives scholarship of an excellent term for referring to both nations and potential nations.

5.6

Lessons from the Muslim World
Vali Nasr

In recent decades, fundamentalism in all its varieties—Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Jewish among others—has inspired profound challenges to secular societies in both the developed and the developing world. Particularly since 9/11, the violent and destabilizing role of fundamentalism in the Muslim world has attracted tremendous interest. In this contribution, Vali Nasr explains that the raging conflict between religious and secular worldviews may lead to a distinctive homegrown model of government in the Muslim world. What are the prospects that a moderate fundamentalism open to compromise can ally with secular forces to help advance development and modernization in Muslim states?

Secularism has come under assault over the course of the last two decades, in developing as well as industrialized societies, in democracies as well as dictatorships. Christian, Hindu, Islamic, and Jewish fundamentalisms,