

Nations, Nation-Building, and Cultural Intervention: A Social Science Perspective

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I. Introduction

Nation-building has been one of the buzz words in the current debate on post-war Iraq and the efforts on the part of the international community to restructure or rebuild the country.¹ As an all-purpose term it is commonly applied to all attempts to alter the constitutional and political make-up of Iraq by either the Iraqis themselves, the Coalition, the larger international community or international organizations. They all, it would seem, are engaged in nation-building in Iraq. This usage of

¹ J. Hippler, "Gewaltkonflikte, Konfliktprävention und Nationenbildung – Hintergründe eines politischen Konzepts", in: J. Hippler (ed.), *Nation-Building: Ein Schlüsselkonzept für friedliche Konfliktbearbeitung?*, 2004, 14 et seq.; J. Dobbins et. al., *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq*, 2003.

the term, however convenient it may seem, obscures the complexity of the process it appears to refer to.

In fact, what the term nation-building usually avoids is the uncomfortable reality of a great number of processes – social, institutional, intellectual, ideological, and political – hiding behind this easy terminological solution. At the same time, however, the evasiveness of the term suggests that the issues at stake are somewhat greater and more complex than a mere restructuring or introduction of political institutions and legal frameworks: this would be called state-building and is an important part of any nation-building process. Nation-building, however, transcends the state and draws on many more sources than state-building does, because a nation is not a state, and even nation states are not necessarily coterminous with nations.

Therefore, the obvious point of departure for any analysis of what nation-building could reasonably be held to mean should be to offer yet another answer to the question: what is a nation?² Following a brief summary of the ongoing academic debate about nations and nationalism, the process of nation-building itself will be presented and its central component described as the creation of a *usable past*. Since historians and sociologists have pointed out the close conceptual and chronological connection between the rise of nations and democracy, linked by the notion of popular sovereignty, a successful nation will then be defined as a democratic nation, before discussing elite consensus and

² One word on the terminology which will be used throughout this paper: the term ‘nationalism’ has acquired a thoroughly negative connotation in popular usage and even in academic discourse. It is commonly associated with the aggressive phenomenon of mass nationalism which spread through Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, culminating in the explosions of hatred and violence of the two World Wars. In analytic terms, however, this does not appear to be satisfactory. Nationalism did not start at mass level and what we are actually looking at is a particular and later stage in the history of nationalism. What is meant by a ‘nationalist’ here is someone who is an adherent of the nation: someone who believes and accepts that nations exist and who is part of a society with a national collective identity. In this, the terminological usage of recent scholarship in history, political science, and sociology on nationalism following Liah Greenfeld is adopted.

symbolic institutions as factors for a successful nation-building process.³

The third part of this paper will take a look at nation-building as cultural intervention. Although it could be said that when seen from the perspective of a pre-national body politic, any nation-building process constitutes a cultural intervention, what is important here, is the case of foreign intervention. As foreign interventions usually only occur in cases of unsuccessful nation-building, this means that the intervening power is not only faced with the task of influencing a nation-building process according to the aims of the intervention but also with the reasons for the unsuccessful nation-building so far. Therefore, the focus will be on two complicating factors common in such cases: a transition process from one form of rule to another and a situation of failure of multi-national states.

II. What is a Nation?

1. The Nation as an Idea

Ernest Renan's famous question "What is a nation?" in his lecture at the Sorbonne in 1887 marks the beginning of the academic debate on nations and nationalism, which continues to this day.⁴ There are three main schools of thought, which roughly could be described as nationalist, modernist, and imaginist although it must be noted that they are more interrelated than this division would suggest.⁵

Nations have been regarded as a "soul", a "spiritual principle" or a "moral conscious" by nineteenth-century scholars such as *Renan* who also believed in the antiquity of the nation and interpreted its rise

³ For a concise summary of the literature on the problem of nationalism and democracy, see P.A. Kraus, *Nationalismus und Demokratie: Politik im spanischen Staat der Autonomen Gemeinschaften*, 1996, 56 et seq.

⁴ E. Renan, *Was ist eine Nation?...und andere politische Schriften*, 1995, 56 et seq. (58).

⁵ For a concise summary of the debate (and a different grouping), see R. Wodak et al., *Zur diskursiven Konstruktion nationaler Identität*, 1998, 20 et seq.

merely as a collective process of becoming aware of one's nationality.⁶ This and similar views basically represent the nationalist school, that is the history of nations written by nationalists.

The method applied by the nationalist school essentially is to look at visible manifestations and characteristics of nations and to extrapolate some kind of general definition from them. To count and accumulate so called objective criteria such as territory, language, statehood, and culture would be the first step and claiming popular identification with them would be the second. The long-winded argument between the proponents of the *Staatsnation* and the *Kulturnation* with all its overtones of Franco-German antagonism shows the ultimate futility of such an approach because neither concept can be applied universally.⁷ Moreover, there will always be communities or political entities meeting all "objective" criteria without being a nation and *vice versa*.⁸

The protagonists of the modernist school, in contrast, have vigorously disputed the nationalist assertion of the antiquity of the nation. Ernest Gellner's famous words of nationalism creating nations and not *vice versa*, is a direct response to the nationalist conception of nations as having always existed and only recently having occupied a more prominent place in the minds of the inhabitants of Europe.⁹ In fact, Gellner and others have claimed that the rise of nations and nationalism has been the "logical" consequence of a transition from one social order to another – from agrarian to industrial society.¹⁰ The need of modern industrial societies for increasing cultural unity in order to reach a high

⁶ Renan, see note 4. See also E. Balibar, "Die Nation: Form, Geschichte, Ideologie", in: E. Balibar/ I. Wallerstein (eds), *Rasse, Klasse, Nation: Ambivalente Identitäten*, 1990, 107 et seq.

⁷ R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, 1992, 11; D. Richter, "Der Mythos der "guten" Nation: Zum theoriegeschichtlichen Hintergrund eines folgenschweren Mißverständnisses", *Soziale Welt* 3 (1994), 304 et. seq; A.F. Reiterer, *Die unvermeidbare Nation: Ethnizität, Nation und nachnationale Gesellschaft*, 1988, 1. I would follow Maxim Silverman's critique of the *Staatsnation-Kulturnation* dichotomy, since both nationalist historiographies make use of "objective criteria" and both concepts depend on popular acceptance or "will" in order to acquire ideological and political power, see M. Silverman, *Rassismus und Nation: Einwanderung und die Krise des Nationalstaats in Frankreich*, 1994, 34.

⁸ E. Gellner, *Nationalismus und Moderne*, 1995, 85; E. Hobsbawm, *Nationen und Nationalismus: Mythos und Realität seit 1780*, 1991, 16.

⁹ Gellner, see above, 86-87.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

level of workforce mobility, is at the heart of the modernist perspective.¹¹ This cultural unity was, according to the modernist school, provided by nationalism which, in turn, has been propagated by the economic elite in order to stabilize the new social order beneficial to their interests. All this has led *Gellner* to claim that “nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.”¹² It is important to note that this view rests in large part on the assumption that nationalism was a response to modernity.

This predominantly structuralist approach has been challenged by the imaginist school, most prominently represented by the very influential work of *Benedict Anderson*. The central argument here is that nations like any other large communities are imagined since “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” What has been called a “spiritual principle” by the nationalist school and is represented by the modernists almost like a political plot of the economically dominant classes, is taken a step further here: nations only exist through an act of the imagination. From there, *Anderson* goes on to say that, therefore, nations should be distinguished not by their supposed falsity or genuineness “but by the style in which they are imagined.”¹³

Nations, according to *Anderson*, are imagined as sovereign, limited and as a community. They are sovereign, because “the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm”, they are limited because “even the largest of them [...] has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations”, and it is imagined as a community, because “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”¹⁴ However, *Anderson* reverts to structuralism to explain this creative achievement by pointing to several cultural roots of nationalism. The most important of these is the invention and spread of book printing. This “print-capitalism”, as *Anderson* calls it, made it

¹¹ Hobsbawm, see note 8, 21; F. Heckmann, *Ethnische Minderheiten, Volk und Nation: Soziologie inter-ethnischer Beziehungen*, 1992, 41-43.

¹² E. Gellner, *Thought and Change*, 1964, 169.

¹³ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 1991, 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

possible for an ever-increasing number of people “to think about themselves, and to relate to others, in profoundly new ways.”¹⁵

The necessity or possibility to think about fraternity, power and time in a new way arose only after the decline of three fundamental cultural conceptions which *Anderson* identifies as the transcontinental religious communities with their sacred script-languages, the dynastic realm, and temporality.¹⁶ They were all challenged by the dramatic changes in the way mankind conceived of itself which took place over several centuries, beginning in the late Middle Ages and – arguably – ending in the late 18th century.¹⁷

The cosmically central worldview of the great religious communities was replaced by a more culturally pluralist conception of the wider world which also led to a territorialization of faiths and language, foreshadowing the competitive language of nationalists. The dynastic realm with a monarchy at the apex of the social and political order deriving legitimacy from the divinity underwent considerable reformulations even before the French Revolution and remained firmly in the defensive ever after.¹⁸ Throughout the 19th century, for example, the traditional legitimacy of monarchy was steadily diminishing and many European princes included national signs in the symbolic projection of their rule in order to increase their support base.¹⁹ The changes in the conception of time underline the general movement away from a holistic worldview. Where there had been, as Anderson writes, a sense of time in which “cosmology and history were indistinguishable” with “the origins of the world and of men essentially identical”, all this changed in the course of the 17th century.²⁰ It is a new relationship between present and past which marks the beginning of the modern age. The horrendous experience of the religious civil war in Europe from 1630 to 1648 initially had reinforced the apocalyptic expectations of the world’s and time’s end by means of a final judgment. When this, however, did not materialize, all that had appeared to be the work of God, was now

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19-36.

¹⁷ See also G. Delany/ P. O’Mahony, *Nationalism and Social Theory: Modernity and the Recalcitrance of the Nation*, 2002, 4.

¹⁸ Anderson, see note 13, 19 et seq.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22. See also, for example, R. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, 1995 and 2000, Vol. I, 255-296, 379-404, Vol. II, 159-306.

²⁰ Anderson, see note 13, 36.

perceived as the work of man. History, therefore, suddenly became disposable in two ways: for the one, who “makes” history, and for the historian who writes history.²¹ This is what *Anderson* means by nationalism being a search for a new and meaningful way in which to connect community, social order, history and future. Essentially, it is a new form of imagining an explanation of who and what a society is, has been, and will be.

What we see in *Anderson*'s thinking is essentially a modified structuralism. While emphasizing the creative and imaginative aspect, this central argument is flanked by two arguments: the first basically claims that nationalism is an appropriate response to the demise of an ancient social order and its legitimizing ideology. His second argument is that nationalism spread with the increasing success of book-printing and would not have done so otherwise. Nationalism, therefore, is presented as a reaction to the emergence of the modern world.

A more radical theory has been put forward by *Liah Greenfeld* whose central argument is that it is not nationalism which is defined by its modernity but rather modernity that is defined by nationalism. Her claim therefore is that “the emergence of nationalism predated the development of every significant component of modernization” and “it is nationalism which has made our world, politically, what it is”. According to *Greenfeld*, “the only foundation of nationalism”, the *sine qua non* of nationalism, is in fact, an idea – the idea of the nation.²²

The idea of the nation, *Greenfeld* writes, emerged over a long period of time and can best be traced by following the semantic permeations of the word ‘nation’. The individual stages of this process need not detain us here, but it is important to note that the Latin word *natio* underwent considerable changes of meaning in the course of the Middle Ages but never acquired the meaning of the modern word ‘nation’. In addition, it has been shown that in mediaeval Latin, *natio* neither described a linguistic nor a political community. Even in the works of *Montesquieu*, *de Maistre*, and *Schopenhauer* we still find – after a number of semantic zigzags – the word ‘nation’ describing a political, social, and cultural

²¹ R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten*, 1989, 261, 266, 315; R. Bubner, *Geschichtsprozesse und Handlungsnormen: Untersuchungen zur praktischen Philosophie*, 1984, 74.

²² L. Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, 1992, 3, 18, 21. For her critique of *Anderson* and *Gellner*, see footnote 16, 496 et seq. and L. Greenfeld, “The Emergence of Nationalism in England and France”, *Research in Political Sociology* 5 (1991), 333 et seq.

elite which underlines the fact that as late as the 18th century the word and with it the concept of the nation in its modern sense had not managed entirely to supplant older meanings. By that time, however, the modern word had already been coined by the first nation there was: England. In the sixteenth century, the English nation defined itself for the first time as a sovereign people. When this idea of the nation began to spread to other countries in the 18th century, it acquired the additional component uniqueness, and ever since the word has meant a unique and sovereign people.²³

This intellectual revolution is remarkable in a number of ways: first, a society or community imagines and names itself a nation. This nation consists of a people which is the source of individual identity, bearer of sovereignty, central object of loyalty and basis for collective solidarity. With this, the idea of the nation replaces older ideas of community, such as being a subject of a prince, member of a guild or a nobleman. This is not to say that aristocrats would stop seeing themselves as such, but the important point here is that being an aristocrat would be compatible with being a member of a particular nation. All divisions within a nation such as class, place, or status, *Greenfeld* writes, are only seen as superficial ones, since the people is “usually perceived as larger than any concrete community and always as fundamentally homogeneous.” Once this is the case, we can say that nations are no longer merely ideas but identities.

The specificity of nationalism is one of perspective: it is not to look at a specific object but to look at an object in a specific way.²⁴ The people, for example, have always been there, as no countries could exist without populations, and even a prince would not be a prince without subjects. What is new, however, is to look at what has been there for a long time in a nationalist fashion, almost as if one used tinted spectacles: the population suddenly takes on a different color and becomes the people which is regarded as unique and sovereign and thus becomes the source of the individual’s identity.

²³ Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, see above, 4-14. See also G. Zernatto, “Nation: The History of a Word”, *Review of Politics* 6 (1944), 351 et seq.; H.D. Kahl, “Einige Beobachtungen zum Sprachgebrauch von *natio* im mittelalterlichen Latein mit Ausblicken auf das neuhochdeutsche Fremdwort Nation”, in: H. Beumann/ W. Schröder (eds), *Aspekte der Nationenbildung im Mittelalter: Ergebnisse der Marburger Rundgespräche 1972-1975*, 1978, 63 et seq. (104-105).

²⁴ Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, see note 22, 3.

From England, this new idea spread to other countries where it unfolded its transformative power and was itself transformed in the course of the process. France, Russia, Germany, and other European countries developed new images of themselves by applying the idea of the nation to their reality. This process established a two-fold dialogue in the societies concerned. Examples of countries which had already established themselves as nations informed and inspired others in the midst of the process while at the same time, in each individual nationalizing country, the original idea was discussed and applied to the particular traditions available for nationalist reinterpretation. One of the main reasons for the success of the idea and the desire on the part of a growing number of countries to import and adapt it to their individual needs, is the relative dominance of England in 18th century Europe and the general ascendancy of the West – both had the effect of making the nation appear as the model for European statehood with the greatest promise of success in the future.²⁵

Within the societies importing nationalism, three main phases of the process can be identified: structural, cultural, and psychological. The first phase is usually characterized by a reformation of an influential social group or a change in the social status of that group. This structural change is no longer reflected in the identity of that group which leads to a crisis of identity. The search for a new identity begins and although it is by no means a foregone conclusion that this would be a national identity, when it happens, it can be explained by the recently imported new ideas now in circulation. The decisive moment for the adoption of a national identity is, however, that the crisis *can* be resolved by adopting a national identity. It is important to note at this point, that this will only be the case if the experience of a national identity has a direct bearing on the life of the individual and if this contact is experienced as positive. Only then will the adoption of a national identity result in a greater sense of security and identification with the nation.²⁶

²⁵ Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, see note 22, 14.

²⁶ Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, see note 22, 26; W. Bloom, *Personal Identity, National Identity, and International Relations*, 1990, 59. In this context, Max Weber's famous definition of "subjective meaning" is also worth looking at again, as is Georg Simmel's idea of the individual finding a place in a more general identity, and that, in fact, this general identity from the outset allows for individuality. See M. Weber, *Soziologische Grundbegriffe*, 1984, 19; G. Simmel, *Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, 1992, 61.

The second and cultural phase is a process of application. The social group who imported the concept identifies with it and applies it to the conditions of the country in which it lives. Decisive factors determining this process are the social and political status of this avant-garde group, as well as their hopes, interests, and fears. Some elements of the traditional identity of the importers will survive this process, and many components of pre-national culture such as history, language, or music will even find an amplifier in the emerging national identity.²⁷

The third and psychological phase is already beginning during the cultural phase and it defines and determines the direction the reinterpretation of the imported idea will take. Every society which took on the foreign idea of the nation turned to the country of origin which served as a model. From the perspective of the importers, the model was of superior quality to the imitation and constant contact did nothing to alleviate this sense of inferiority: in fact, the reaction of *ressentiment* can be observed quite often within nationalizing societies.²⁸

The Russian development may serve as an illustration of this point. There, Western values such as individualism and reason had been ac-

²⁷ Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, see note 22, 15.

²⁸ *Ressentiment* as a sociological and psychological phenomenon has first been described by *Friedrich Nietzsche* in the late 19th century, and it has been elaborated by *Max Scheler* just before the Great War. *Ressentiment* is an “imaginary revenge” by those who feel inferior to the original creators. Their denial of the superiority of the model is, according to Nietzsche, a creative act, but it is always a reaction to some kind of pre-established model. *Scheler* takes this a step further. He, too, writes that frustrated attempts to realize a certain value lead to a tendency to resolve the tension between desire and inability by denigrating the value which had been attempted to realize. In certain cases, *Scheler* continues, this process can result in a positive evaluation of a value negating the original value. This transvaluation of values, meaning the replacement of the values of the model by counter-values, is of tremendous importance in the history of nationalism. *Greenfeld* even concludes that “ressentiment was the single most important factor in determining the specific terms in which national identity was defined.” See F. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral: Eine Streitschrift*, 1991, 30; M. Scheler, *Das Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moralen*, 1978, 26, 29; Greenfeld, see note 22, 16. For more recent attempts to apply the concept, see K.H. Bohrer/K. Scheel (eds), *Ressentiment! Zur Kritik der Kultur*, 2004. For a review of this volume pointing out the anti-semitic nature of Nietzsche’s argument and the anti-democratic connotations of *ressentiment*, see P. Bürger, ‘Herren unter sich’, *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 1 (2005), 168 et seq.

cepted as applicable and attainable by the Russian elite who also thought that it would be possible to overtake Western Europe in all aspects of public life within a reasonable amount of time. By the end of the 18th century, however, it became increasingly clear that this would not be the case. Influenced by *ressentiment*, the intellectual matrix of Russian nationalism increasingly reflected a transvaluation of values, and individualism and reason were juxtaposed with the supposedly Russian values of collectivity and spirituality. In consequence, this process produced one of the most enduring myths of Russian nationalism – that of the Russian soul as a distinguishing feature of Russianness, although it is, in fact, the invention of a frustrated elite of over-optimistic nationalists at the beginning of the 19th century.²⁹

However, this three-stage model describing the importation, interpretation and application of the idea of the nation is what can be called nation-building. All structural characteristics of a given country will be informed and inspired by this process, and vice versa. What is commonly understood by nation-building would, therefore, only represent the tangible surface of a somewhat deeper intellectual revolution.

Before discussing this process of nation-building in greater detail, it seems appropriate to look at the validity of this theory of nationalism in the context of the problems the international community is facing in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, or Kosovo.

If *Greenfeld's* assumption that nationalism predates modernity is correct, the conclusion would be that nationalism is a modernizing vision.³⁰ Her model can therefore be applied to nationalism in the third

²⁹ Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, see note 22, 227 et seq.; 257 et seq., 266 et seq.

³⁰ Recent sociological thinking on this question supports this view. What is seen as modernity or the modern condition essentially takes on the character of a project rather than a particular institutional reality. *Peter Wagner*, for example, emphasizes that there is a difference between the discourse about the modern project and the practices and institutions of modern societies, implying that the debates and ideological sea changes were much more revolutionary than any structural layout of a modern or modernizing society would reflect. *Wagner* even uses a term very familiar to any student of *Anderson* and *Greenfeld* when he writes about the “imaginary meaning of modernity” in order to describe the revolution in human self-perception at the beginning of the project – which is a new and fundamentally autonomous image of man. This autonomy would apply in relation to others as well as to his rule over his own body, nature, and to his capability to act in order to further his own aims. Thus, the constitutive moment of modernity is individuals seeing themselves as the makers of social order

world where nationalism cannot easily be regarded as the *result* of a modernization process. We must, however, also accept that third-world visions of modernity might differ substantially from Western models, as *ressentiment* tends to be such an important factor in the construction of national identities.³¹ This, however, would raise grave doubts even at this early stage of applying theory to reality about the prospects of democracy and Western values in societies so far removed from the European history of thought. Those countries will eventually turn to their own culture and historical experience when searching for components by which to establish their uniqueness, and democracy might not be one of them.

The first conclusion, therefore, to be drawn at this point would be that we will have to look at nations for what they say they are rather than what we think they should be.

If one chose to ignore the collective subjectivity of nationalism and uphold the view that there are objective criteria for both a nation and modernity, one would lose all potential openings for influencing any nation-building process abroad.

The second conclusion following from this must be that the fundamental political problem of all Western attempts to influence nation-building in other parts of the world is the possible incompatibility of the results of any nation-building process with Western foreign policy interests.

In consequence, the West will have to revisit some of its most cherished cultural assumptions, such as the universality of its values which can fuel *ressentiment* and renders results in line with Western values and interests more unlikely.

In order to explore the admittedly limited possibilities of influencing nation-building with the result of a sustainable development towards Western models, the following section will focus on a number of

and imagining the future. By doing this, *Kurt Imhoff* writes, they devalue transcendental reasons for contingency and religious legitimation of social order. In consequence, they lose traditional landmarks guiding their actions. See P. Wagner, *Soziologie der Moderne: Freiheit und Disziplin*, 1995; 25, 82; K. Imhoff/ G. Romano, *Die Diskontinuität der Moderne: Zur Theorie des sozialen Wandels*, 1996, 12.

³¹ On nationalisms outside of Europe, see J. Breuilley, "The State and Nationalism", in: M. Guibernau/J. Hutchinson (eds), *Understanding Nationalism*, 2001, 32 et seq., 45-48.

key components in nation-building – and on the key players: the nation builders.

2. Nation-Building: A Usable Past and its Creators

Central to nation-building is the creation of a national history. A successful nationalization of the past would meet two key requirements of both nationalism and modernity: first, national histories always attempt to prove the uniqueness of the nation. Second, the great national histories of the 19th century present the political order of the day as the result of a great national struggle, thus bolstering the legitimacy of the regime at the time in nationalist terms. In *Nikolay Karamzin's* "History of the Russian State", for example, we read:

"History is in some ways the holy book of peoples: it is important and necessary. It is the mirror of their past and their doings; the record of revelation and morality, the legacy of ancestors to their descendants, it is a supplement to and an explanation of the present, and an example for the future."³²

The political dimension is even clearer in *Heinrich von Treitschke's* "German History in the 19th Century". The introduction begins resoundingly:

"Despite her great antiquity, the German nation is the youngest among the great nations of Western Europe. Twice, she was awarded an age of youthfulness, twice the struggle for the foundations of powerful statehood and a free civilization. A millennium ago, she created the noblest of the Germanic kingdoms. Eight centuries later and in entirely changed circumstances, she had to begin to rebuild her state anew, and it was only in our days that she has rejoined the ranks of nations as a united power."³³

This nationalist perspective was by no means unintentional.³⁴ Both *Treitschke* and *Karamzin*, alongside many other historians, were thus

³² N.M. Karamzin, *Istoria gosudarstva Rossiiskogo*, 1892; quoted in: N.M. Karamzin/ G.P. Makogonenko (ed.), *Predaniya vekov: Skazaniya, legendy, rasskazy iz "Istoria gosudarstva Rossiiskogo"*, 1988, 31. My translation.

³³ H. v. Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert*, 1895-1897, Vol. 1, 1. My translation.

³⁴ *Karamzin* had been appointed official historiographer in 1803, and in 1818, he dedicated his monumental work to the tsar, thus symbolically placing

engaged not only in historical research and establishing their profession as an academic discipline, but also in constructing a *usable past* conducive to the legitimacy of the political order at the time.

The concept of a usable past has been applied to authoritarian regimes in transition to democracy and it usually describes the search for historical experiences which might be drawn on in the effort to legitimize and stabilize the new system. In this particular context, the historical experiences in question would be an exposure to democracy and some kind of democratic heritage.³⁵

Although 19th century nationalist historians did not often look for a democratic heritage, the process of stabilizing the present regime by referring to particular aspects of history is essentially the same.³⁶ It follows from this that creating a usable past for a large community requires some sort of social consensus about the historical experience. *Archie Brown* has called this consensus “political culture” and he defines this as “the subjective perception of history and politics, the fundamental beliefs and values, the foci of identification and loyalty, and the political knowledge and expectations which are the product of the

Russian history at the disposal of the autocracy. See H. Lemberg, *Die nationale Gedankenwelt der Dekabristen*, 1963, 127-128; E.C. Thaden, *The Rise of Historicism in Russia*, 1999, 56. In 1888, *Treitschke* positioned himself very firmly in the camp of anti-liberal opinion in Germany when he published a brochure belittling and ridiculing the personality and politics of Frederick III, the father of the last Kaiser, who had been the symbol of potential liberal reforms in the late 19th century and had therefore stood for an alternative vision of German nationhood. See J.C.G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II: Der Aufbau der Persönlichen Monarchie 1888-1900*, 2001, 76.

³⁵ J.J. Linz/ A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, 1996, 451-452. For a usable past as an approach to cultural history without attempts at systematization, see W.J. Bouwsma, *A Usable Past: Essays in European Cultural History*, 1990.

³⁶ The concept of a *usable past* can be traced back to *Nietzsche*. His essay “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life”, introduces the notion that it is methodically impossible to look at history unfiltered and *in toto*. In fact, he writes, it is imperative to deconstruct and reconstruct history if it is to be of any political use at all. *Nietzsche* goes on to say that not only individuals like politicians can benefit from creating their own usable pasts but societies as a whole, too. See F. Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben*, 1989, 40, 43.

specific historical experience of nations and groups.”³⁷ A political culture, therefore, would be a usable past at work: it would strive towards presenting history as leading towards the present, while shaping the present in the image of the past.

In order to create a national political culture all existing elements of consensus need to be recognized and amplified if they are in accordance with the political interests of the present order, while, at the same time, all dissenting aspects of the historical experience, alternatives or opposition need to be downplayed and effectively excluded from the national narrative. This can be achieved by means of historiography, literature, art, architecture, or music, all of which would attempt to present the relationship between past and present as a natural, organic and inevitable development towards fulfilling the national destiny. If successful, the political culture would, indeed, reflect those nationalist efforts. In other words: if what *Brown* calls “the subjective perception of history and politics” within a society is centered on the nation as the result of the efforts on the part of the nationalists, then nationalism would be the political culture of the society concerned.

Since no nation can exist without a national political culture based on a usable past, there are numerous examples of what forms a usable past can take. It is important to note, however, that there were attempts to create usable pasts in the pre-national era, as well. Some of those early usable pasts later were incorporated into a modern national narrative.³⁸ Creating a usable past, however, is an ongoing process and a par-

³⁷ A. Brown, “Introduction”, in: A. Brown/ J. Gray (eds), *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States*, 1977, 1 et seq. (1).

³⁸ For example, Catherine II of Russia employed enlightenment thinking as the foundation of a new, national legitimation of autocratic Russian monarchy. She found ample evidence for her assertion that autocracy was the form of government most attuned to the Russian national character in early Russian chronicles. Translating this *usable past* into foreign policy, the empress drew on the Byzantine heritage and the traditions of the Orthodox Church in establishing the ‘liberation’ of Constantinople as Russia’s ‘historic mission’ which remained on the Russian foreign policy agenda until 1916. On this, see S.H. Cross/ O.P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (eds), *The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text*, 1973; H. Rüß, “Die Warägerfrage”, in: M. Hellmann/ G. Schramm/ K. Zernack (eds), *Handbuch der Geschichte Rußlands*, 1981, Vol. 1, I, 267 et seq.; Wortman, see note 19, Vol. 1, 5-6, 22-29, 133, 138 f.; F. Göpfert (ed.), *Katharina-Lesebuch: Literarisches aus der Feder der russischen Zarin Katharina II.*, 1996, 149 et seq.; C. Scharf, *Katharina II., Deutschland und die Deutschen*, 1995, 252; Ch.L. de Mon-

ticularly difficult task after events that have disrupted historical continuity. The debate about history in Western Germany after 1945 may serve as an example of the political nature of such a process.³⁹

All those who participate in creating and proliferating a usable past among other members of the community can be called nation build-

tesquieu, *De l'Esprit des Lois*, Book 8, Chapter 19, in: *Œuvres complètes*, Vol. 2, 1976, 365; Catherine II, *Instruction für die zu Verfertigung des Entwurfs zu einem neuen Gesetzbuche verordnete Commission*, 1768 (reprint 1970), 5; A. Lentin, "‘Une Âme Républicaine?’ Catherine, Montesquieu, and the Nature of Government in Russia: The *nakaz* through the eyes of M.M. Shcherbatov, in: *Filosofskii Vek: Al'manakh*, 11. Ekaterina II i ee vremia. Sovremennyi Vzgliad, Sankt-Peterburgskii Tsentr Istorii Idei, 1999, 79 et seq.; E. Hösch, "Das sogenannte ‘griechische Projekt’ Katharinas II.", in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* XII (1964), 168 et seq.; V.C. Vasyukov, "Glavnyi priz": S.D. Sasonov i soglasenie o Konstantinopole i proliivakh, in: A.V. Ignatiev/ I.S. Rybachenok/ G.A. Sanin (eds), *Rossiskaya diplomatiya v portetakh*, 1992, 355 et seq.

³⁹ On the question of a 'European' identity replacing a traditional German identity, see D. Langewiesche, *Nation, Nationalismus, Nationalstaat in Deutschland und Europa*, 2000, 190; T.G. Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent*, 1994, 19-25. On the *Historikerstreit*, see R.J. Evans, "The new nationalism and the old history: perspectives on the West German *Historikerstreit*", *Journal of Modern History* 59 (1987), 761 et seq.; G.A. Craig, "The war of the German historians", *The New York Review of Books* of 15 January 1987; G. Eley, "Nazism, Politics, and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German *Historikerstreit* 1986-1987", *Past and Present* 121 (1988), 171 et seq.; C.S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*, 1988; R.J. Evans, *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to escape from the Nazi Past*, 1989. See also an entire volume published in 1989 by the Federal Agency for Political Education on history and consciousness of the Federal Republic of Germany, which almost exclusively deals with the relationship of contemporary Germans with the Nazi past, thus establishing the Nazi experience as the only source of a historical consciousness of West Germans in the year of reunification. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, *Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Geschichte, Bewußtsein*, 1989. On the role of the presidents of Western Germany in public historical discourse, see D. Langewiesche, "Geschichte als politisches Argument: Vergangenheitsbilder als Gegenwartskritik und Zukunftsprognose: Die Reden der deutschen Bundespräsidenten", *Saeculum* 1992, 36 et seq.; R. von Weizsäcker, *Von Deutschland aus: Reden des Bundespräsidenten*, 1987, 7-8.

ers.⁴⁰ Usually, they are members of the elite.⁴¹ There are three main reasons for this. First, they have a political or economic or social interest in nationalism and would be the main beneficiaries of the stabilizing and legitimizing effects of a nationalist political culture based upon a national usable past. Second, they are the only ones sufficiently educated to produce literature or art, or engage in historical research.⁴² Third, by definition, members of an elite possess influence and are thus capable of extending their beliefs to the population at large.⁴³ Initially, all nationalisms were created by an elite playing the decisive role in the formation of the intellectual content of each nationalism. Nationalism at mass level, by contrast, has never made a substantial intellectual contribution or alteration to the matrix previously established by a relatively small group of people.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ A usable past need not take the form of historical writing. The role of art and architecture in visualizing the nation is a particularly interesting one. See S. Bozdoğan, *Modernism and Nation-building: Turkish Architectural Culture in the Early Republic*, 2001.

⁴¹ Elite is classically defined as those individuals “occupying positions at the top of a group, organisation, or institution [...] and who are, because of the role of their positions, sufficiently powerful or influential beyond the concerns of their groups to contribute directly to the preservation or change of the social structure, its founding norms; or who can be, because of their prestige, an example to others beyond their group and thus normatively codetermining their actions.” See H.P. Dreitzel, *Elite-Begriff und Sozialstruktur: Eine soziologische Begriffsanalyse*, 1961, 71.

⁴² On the role of intellectuals in the German nation-building process, see B. Giesen/ K. Junge/ C. Kritschgau, “Vom Patriotismus zum völkischen Denken: Intellektuelle als Konstrukteure der deutschen Identität”, in: H. Berding (ed.), *Nationales Bewusstsein und kollektive Identität: Studien zur Entwicklung des kollektiven Bewusstseins in der Neuzeit*, 1996, 345 et seq.

⁴³ G. Moyser/ M. Wagstaffe, “Studying elites: theoretical and methodological issues”, in: G. Moyser/ M. Wagstaffe (eds), *Research Methods for Elite Studies*, 1987, 1 et seq. (3).

⁴⁴ On the importance of educational policies, see E. Donnert, “Volksbildung und Elitenbildung: Kulturpolitische Maßnahmen Katharinas II.”, in: E. Hübner/ J. Kusber/ P. Nitsche (eds), *Rußland zur Zeit Katharinas II.*, 1998, 215 et seq.; J.L. Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland: Education, Educators, and Pedagogical Ideals in Eighteenth Century Russia*, 1979, 70-71. On the role of the educated noble elite in the French nation-building process, see Greenfeld, see note 22, 148; F. Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 1981; S. Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*, 1989; G. Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century*:

Seen in this context, educational policies are not only the crucial factor for the emergence of nationalist elites but, indeed, for including wider circles of the population in this new identity. In fact, education is one of the means by which identification can be achieved as it enables the individual to find a meaningful place for himself within the wider context of society.⁴⁵ Therefore, educational policies and their implementation by teachers at all levels of the educational system are a key factor for nation-building. This, however, reinforces a point made earlier: in order to enable teachers to perform their role as key nation builders successfully, some degree of consensus about what they are supposed to teach is clearly necessary. Therefore, we will now turn to what factors of successful nation-building can be identified and how they would work together.

3. Factors of Successful Nation-Building

a. Nationalism and Democracy

As indicated at the outset of this paper, successful nations are defined as democratically constituted nations. In terms of theory, nationalism does not require a particular form of government, although there is always a strong element of at least implicit popular sovereignty involved in any nation-building process. It could, therefore, be argued that democracy is the natural form of government for nations, and that, indeed, nationalism and democracy depend on each other.⁴⁶

From Feudalism to Enlightenment, 1985; F. L. Ford, *Robe and Sword: The Regrouping of the French Aristocracy after Louis XIV*, 1953; P. Higonnet, *Class, Ideology and the Rights of Nobles during the French Revolution*, 1981. On the role of education in enlightenment thought, see U. Im Hof, *Das Europa der Aufklärung*, 1995, 139-142, 179-194.

⁴⁵ Simmel, see note 26.

⁴⁶ G. Nodia, "Nationalism and Democracy", in: L. Diamond/ M.F. Plattner, (eds), *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy*, 1994, 3 et seq. (4). On this, see also, S. Rokkan, "Dimensions of State-Formation and Nation-Building: A Possible Paradigm for Research on Variations within Europe", in: C. Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, 1975, 562 et seq. For an interesting view on the difficulties involved in theories of global democracy without nation-states, see I. Maus, "Nationalstaatliche Grenzen und das Prinzip der Volkssouveränität", in: M. Gräser/

However, it is possible to construct an autocratic regime as the supreme embodiment of the will of the people and thus to present a non-democratic regime as the expression of a particular national character. Even those nationalisms, though, have to draw on the notion of popular sovereignty in order to legitimize non-democratic forms of rule. Popular acclaim and consent is often stage managed in authoritarian regimes and designed to substitute a meaningful democracy. Still, within the rituals of making a dictatorship take on the appearance of a democracy, the nucleus for a democratic development is contained, at least in terms of legitimacy of rule.

The key problems in a non-democratic nation-building process are the exclusive reliance of a particular nationalism on the powers of the state, the military, or the figure of a “leader”, and excluding civil society not only from the institutional layout but from the matrix of national identity – as is the case in Russia, for example. It could be argued that Russia would benefit from the establishment of democracy in order to become more successful as a nation, but that the etatist and authoritarian nature of Russian nationalism is incompatible with democratic government and the advent of civil society.⁴⁷

In terms of foreign policy, the question therefore is whether it is possible to influence nation-building processes from outside in order to promote democracy as a prerequisite to greater internal stability. Implicit in this thinking is, of course, the hope of achieving stability in international relations.⁴⁸

b. Elite Consensus

Given the pivotal role of the elite in any nation-building process, the question of consensus focuses on this particular group. Though it may appear to be easier to reach a sufficient degree of consensus among a relatively small and well educated number of individuals rather than across a population of millions, this does not have to be the case. Most members of any given elite represent vested interests, regions or professions and reaching an agreement is by no means a foregone conclusion.

C. Lammert/ S. Schreyer (eds), *Staat, Nation, Demokratie: Traditionen und Perspektiven moderner Gesellschaften*, 2001, 11 et seq.

⁴⁷ On this, see C.A. Wallander (ed.), *The Sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War*, 1996.

⁴⁸ F. Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*, 2004.

In Russia, for example, there has never been a usable past which the elite as a whole felt comfortable with. The debate between 'Westerners' and 'Slavophiles' is well documented and it should suffice here to note that the divisive nature of this argument stems from different perspectives on the Russian historical experience. Essentially, the question for members of the Russian elite was whether the modernization of the country under Peter the Great did not lead to a denial of older values and traditions which undermined the sense of uniqueness and antiquity among Russians.⁴⁹ In consequence, as of the early 19th century, the Russian elite was divided into those two major camps, with the government and its followers in an unhappy and wavering middling position.⁵⁰ In political terms, this division meant that the Russian elite was never strong enough to bring about substantial changes in the power structure of the country and therefore never successfully challenged the decision-making monopoly of the monarchy before 1917.

Sociological research provides an additional argument for the necessity of elite consensus without which it is unlikely that elite values can be spread widely among the population. Originally applied to the phenomenon of New Social Movements, in many cases the concept of *framing* can offer helpful categories for understanding nation-building beyond the initiating group and including wider sections of the population.⁵¹

⁴⁹ R. Pipes (ed.), *Karamzin's Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia: A Translation and Analysis*, 1959.

⁵⁰ N. Riasanovsky, *A Parting of Ways: Government and the Educated Public in Russia 1801-1855*, 1976.

⁵¹ Essentially, *framing* describes the establishment of a pattern of interpretation which determines the intellectual (and political) organization of experience. A particular *frame* would therefore determine perception, classification, and interpretation of events or facts according to a particular perspective. There are three key elements making up the internal structures of any given interpretational pattern: *diagnostic framing* identifies a particular phenomenon as problematic and establishes it as a unifying topic or concern of the group. In our context, this would be an elite group acquiring a national identity and identifying the lack of national identity among the wider elite and the population as a problem. Usually, this would be combined with a critical perception of social and political conditions at the time. The basis for such a belief could very well be a perceived discrepancy between a glorious past and a rather more disappointing present. The German romantics and their love of the Middle Ages are a case in point. The next step is called *prognostic framing* which describes the conviction that a

The most important precondition for nationalism to spread to the wider elite and non-elite parts of the population is met by one of the central tenets of nationalism itself: the notion of popular sovereignty and fundamental equality. Any elite adopting a national identity may have had their own interests in mind but it would have been impossible to advance those interests without referring to a larger collective body, the nation, at the same time. Nationalist elites entered into their conflicts with traditional divinely ordained monarchies in the name of the people. References to the nation served a double purpose: to legitimize their own involvement and their desire for political power *vis-à-vis* the

remaking of the social and political order along the lines of – in our case – nationalism would be capable of resolving the problems and leading to a brighter future. There are numerous examples of such a process in history, the most prominent certainly being the French estates general declaring themselves to be the national assembly and promising to give the country a constitution. This phase is followed by *motivational framing* which focuses on convincing potential members of the initial group that their individual contribution would make a difference, and that the benefits of participation would outweigh possible negative consequences. This would be particularly difficult for participants coming from groups with a clearly defined previous identity, such as, for example, the nobility. It is therefore no coincidence that Greenfeld has consistently argued for the importance of a crisis of noble identity as a decisive element in the process of adopting the new, national identity among members of the nobility. Of greater interest, however, is the question of finding allies and partners outside the initial group. Again, the concept of *frames* can be helpful as it describes two processes, *frame-bridging* and *frame-extension* as establishing “the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem” and enlarging the group’s “adherent pool by portraying its objectives or activities as attending or being congruent with the values or interests of potential adherents”. See T. Kliment, “Durch Dramatisierung zum Protest? Theoretische Grundlagen und empirischer Ertrag des Framing-Konzepts”, in: K.U. Hellmann/ R. Koopmans (eds), *Paradigmen der Bewegungsforschung: Entstehung und Entwicklung von Neuen Sozialen Bewegungen und Rechtsextremismus*, 1998, 69 et seq. (70-72). See also: D.A. Snow et al., “Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization and Movement Participation”, *American Sociological Review* 51 (1986), 464 et seq. (467, 472); D.A. Snow/ R.D. Benford, “Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization”, in: B. Klandermans (ed.), *International Social Movement Research* 1 (1988), 197 et seq.; J. Wilson, *Introduction to Social Movements*, 1973; B. Klandermans, “The Formation and Mobilization of Consensus”, in: Klandermans, see above, 173 et seq. (183); Greenfeld, see note 22.

ancien régime and the populace at the same time. This is, in a nutshell, the heart of the liberal dilemma in 19th century European politics. Liberal nationalist elites took over power from the pre-national elites and because of the national and inclusive nature of their argument, they lost power to more radical parties towards the 20th century. Liberal nationalists could not stand in the way of electoral reforms including more and more sections of the population in the political decision-making process without denying the principles which had brought them to power in the first place.

c. Symbolic Institutions

One of the most crucial tasks of nation builders is to incorporate existing institutions and traditions in the institutional make-up of the nation according to what importance they might have in the new national narrative. This is an open-ended process since any institutional structure might reinforce or change the national identity in one or another direction and could well be reformed or abolished as a consequence of the process it has triggered in the first place. This, in turn, may not only lead to political instability but to a decrease in social coherence and even to fundamental conflicts about the content of the national narrative and questions of national identity.

It is important to keep in mind that in a national context, all public institutions take on an additional, symbolic meaning: not only are they supposed to perform certain political, social or economic functions but they also form the visible surface of the nation. The historical record would suggest that it can be helpful to remove predominantly symbolic institutions from the political fray as much as possible in order to preserve their meaningfulness beyond political partisanship.

Arguably the most successful case of such a separation of the symbolic from the political sphere is the political system of the United Kingdom. Ever since 1688, the British monarchy has become a less and less visible political player in terms of party politics. This is not to say that it ceased to be visible, on the contrary, after the defeat in the American war of independence and after the French revolution in particular, the monarchy became ever more visible as a symbol of national unity while, at the same time, steadily losing direct political power.⁵²

⁵² On this, see L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, 1992, 195-236. On George V working with the first Labor government, see K. Rose, *King George V*, 1983, 325, 328-330. For an interesting appraisal of constitu-

A more recent example of the usefulness of monarchy is the case of Spain's transition from the Franco dictatorship to a parliamentary monarchy between 1975 and 1978. Within a very short period of time after succeeding *Franco* and becoming king, *Juan Carlos* divested himself of virtually all political power in order to assume the role of a largely ceremonial monarch and become a symbol and promoter of national unity and democracy.⁵³

Monarchy, however, is not always an option available to nation builders, and is certainly not a necessary precondition for effecting

tional monarchy in 20th century Britain see B. Pimlott, *The Queen: A Biography of Elizabeth II*, 1996. The classic text on the political and symbolic role of the British monarchy is still W. Bagehot, *The English Constitution*, 1937.

⁵³ On the royal powers in democratic Spain, see K.M. Rogner, *Die Befugnisse der Krone im spanischen Verfassungsrecht: Umfang und Grenzen des staatsrechtlichen Handlungsermessens der Krone*, 1999. On the role of Juan Carlos in particular, see C. Powell, *Juan Carlos of Spain: Self-Made Monarch*, 1996 and P. Preston, *Juan Carlos: A People's King*, 2004. One of the problems is the demand of many regions in Spain to be recognized as nations and the country as a whole to be redefined as a multi-national state. On this, see M. Guibernau, "Catalonia: A Non-secessionist Nationalism?", in: M. Seymour, (ed.), *The Fate of the Nation-State*, 2004, 234 et seq., 241 et seq.; J. Díez Medrano, *Divided Nations: Class, Politics, and Nationalism in the Basque Country and Catalonia*, 1995; C. L. Irvin, *Militant Nationalism: Between Movement and Party in Ireland and the Basque Country*, 1999; Kraus, see note 2. There is no doubt that the restoration of the *monarchy* was extremely helpful in making the Spanish transition to democracy a peaceful one, as this appealed to the more traditionally conservative elements of Franco's victorious civil war coalition. In his proclamation address, therefore, *Juan Carlos* justified his accession to the throne in terms of historical tradition – which is a good example of constructing a usable past without too much adherence to historical fact. Very generally speaking, Spain did have a tradition of monarchy, and in this respect, *Juan Carlos'* statement rang true and was able to become a cornerstone of a new way of dealing with the Francoist period in Spanish history. By suggesting, however, that his accession signified a return to tradition, the king made a considerable contribution to the coalition of silence, the widespread determination to forget and to ignore the civil war and the entire Franco era in order not to jeopardize the first steps towards democracy. It is an interesting and, perhaps, unique example of silence being a usable past. Ironically, this does not diminish the achievement of both *Juan Carlos* and of Spanish democracy – in 1981, the king successfully defended the new constitution against a military coup d'état.

some degree of functional separation between the symbolic and the political in the state institutions. It is interesting to note, though, that most republics do employ a certain measure of traditionally royal ceremonial in the elevation of a politician who is selected to be head of state.

Both spheres also differ from one another in terms of their openness or accessibility within the political process. Removing the head of state from the political process to a certain degree is commonly reflected by a somewhat restricted access to the office: usually, it is more difficult to become a president than a member of parliament. Obviously, the number of candidates for the headship of state in a hereditary monarchy is severely limited and this may sometimes be a problem. Many republics, however, prescribe a certain set of conditions that a potential candidate needs to meet. In Germany, for example, a president must at least be forty years of age, and is elected by a special assembly, the *Bundesversammlung*, which is convened exclusively for this purpose.⁵⁴ In countries where the head of state is elected by a general vote, this quite commonly takes the form of a two stage election, and the term of office is usually longer than the lifetime of a single parliament. It is also customary for a largely ceremonial president to suspend his membership in a political party for the duration of the tenure.

It is important to complement these restrictions with generally open and socially inclusive institutions at the political level. Participation in the political process by the elite and, indeed, the population as a whole is the crucial element in rendering the national symbolism at the top meaningful. For a head of state to represent, and, in some sense, personify, the entirety of the citizens, their voices need to be heard.

III. Nation-Building as Cultural Intervention

In principle, all nation-building processes are cultural interventions as the center establishes a particular identity on the periphery, or, in other words, the elite creates a national identity for the rest of the population. In addition, there has always been a certain measure of foreignness in nationalism. In Russia, the contributions of enlightenment thought and later German idealism have been crucial. The same applies to Arab na-

⁵⁴ *Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, article 54 paras 1 and 3.

tionalism in which the German notion of the *Kulturnation* played a prominent part.⁵⁵

What concerns us here, however, are more direct interventions – those of foreign powers who have won a position to influence nation-building processes by means of military victory and occupation of another country. Ever since the end of the Cold War, interventions have occurred in cases of humanitarian disasters, such as genocide or ‘ethnic cleansing’, famine, civil war, in response to a war of aggression on a third party or a perceived military threat to the international community. Politically, nations in the grip of civil war or experiencing genocide may present good reasons for intervention. If such an intervention occurs, however, the intervening powers inherit the causes of the crisis and will have to address them.⁵⁶

There is, of course, a multitude of possible reasons for a process of national disintegration leading to unrest or even civil war. The underlying cause of such a development, however, can be a profound disagreement about national identity.

The history of the Spanish civil war is a good example, as it was fought and won in the name of a particular conception of Spanish identity. For Franco and his allies, *Hispanidad* was strongly catholic, authoritarian, and anti-regionalist.⁵⁷ Even thirty years after the end of the war, Franco and his followers insisted on celebrating thirty years of victory rather than of peace, thus upholding the division of Spain into victors and vanquished.⁵⁸

More recently, the case of Yugoslavia illustrates the centrality of nationalism to a process leading to disintegration, war, and foreign intervention.⁵⁹ Yugoslavia highlights, among others, two problems intervening powers often have to deal with: transition from authoritarian rule to

⁵⁵ B. Tibi, *Vom Gottesreich zum Nationalstaat: Islam und panarabischer Nationalismus*, 1987, 113-126.

⁵⁶ G.B. Helman/ S.R. Ratner, “Saving Failed States”, *Foreign Pol’y* 89 (1992/1993), 3 et seq.

⁵⁷ On this, see P. Preston, *The Politics of Revenge: Fascism and the Military in 20th Century Spain*, 1995.

⁵⁸ Preston, *Juan Carlos*, see note 53, 245-246. For the alternative vision contained in a speech to the republican Cortes in 1931 by the minister of justice, Fernando de los Ríos, see J.S. Vidarte, *Las Cortes Constituyentes de 1931-1933: Testimonio del Primer Secretario del Congreso de los Diputados*, 1976, 192-195.

⁵⁹ L. Silber/ A. Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia*, 1995.

democracy and the aftermath of a collapse of a multi-national state. In both cases, the elite plays a crucial role, thus providing an ideal point of departure for looking at both phenomena in the context of nation-building.

The literature on transitions is vast and varied and should only be of interest in this context in so far as it explores the immense difficulties a society is faced with when beginning to transform itself.⁶⁰ The most important point here is the scale of the necessary transition which is, to some extent, prescribed by the goals of the process. In essence, a transition involving substantial and simultaneous changes in the nature of statehood, politics, and the economy presents a greater challenge than a transition in only one of these fields. It should be remembered that most transitions to democracy in Southern Europe and Latin America mostly concerned the political system and did not focus on economic changes. In contrast, post-communist transitions have been called multifold transitions because they touch upon considerably more aspects of public life, the economy in particular. The Spanish transition to democracy, however, is of particular relevance to transition processes in a non-European context as it not only concerned a political systemic change but had to operate in a multi-national state.⁶¹

The eventual aims of the transition need to be taken into account as a factor determining their success, too. One of the reasons for the different post-communist development in Russia and Eastern Europe is precisely that, for most Eastern European countries, the aim of the painful transition process has been the establishment of a democratic political system, a market economy and the acceptance into Western systems of economic and military integration whereas this has never been the case in Russia. Again, the elite plays a crucial role during any transition process as it is necessary to have a counter-elite waiting in the wings to take over from the old one and perform their tasks according to the new ideas and concepts. In terms of political transitions, this has, for example, been the case in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Spain to name but a few. Such an impressive elite consensus across much of the political board and including most relevant sub-elites has clearly been

⁶⁰ Linz/ Stepan, see note 35; G. O'Donnell/ P.C. Schmitter (eds), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, 1986; A. Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, 1991; A. Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 1995.

⁶¹ Kraus, see note 2, 19.

absent in Russia reflecting a fundamental divide in the Russian elite on issues of national identity.⁶²

What has been described in a different context as “imperial collapse” can be applied to the disintegration of multi-national states. It is evident that this can be a major complicating factor for nation-building, as is demonstrated in the case of Yugoslavia. Historians of empire have been keen to point out that the imperial legacy is most marked in demographic and ethnic terms. A frequent consequence of imperial break up, therefore, has been “ethnic mosaics” which did not fit into the post-imperial order of national successor states.⁶³

In the case of Yugoslavia, the two most prominent examples of this are Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Both have experienced what *Lord Curzon* has first called a process of “unmixing peoples” in response to the “unprecedented wholesale restructuring of populations” in the course of the unravelling of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁴ And both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo have experienced international intervention in order to stop the process of ethnic “unmixing”. The historical record would nevertheless suggest that it is precisely in areas which did not experience a process of ethnic “unmixing” that “a core ethnic group tended to dominate the others, and in such a situation, the conflict between the core and the minority groups reproduced itself.”⁶⁵

IV. Conclusions

In general terms, it would be possible to conclude that a breakdown or lack of elite consensus is at the heart of a disintegration process potentially leading to foreign intervention. In order to achieve some degree of stability, therefore, the occupying power’s highest priority should be to facilitate a rebuilding of this consensus. This, however, is almost impossible without some kind of transition process towards a new political and social order. It is important to note that each individual transition

⁶² A.S. Tuminez, “Russian Nationalism and the National Interest in Russian Foreign Policy”, in: Wallander, see note 47, 41 et seq.

⁶³ K. Barkey, “Thinking about Consequences of Empire”, in: K. Barkey/ M. von Hagen (eds), *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building*, 1997, 99 et seq. (102 et seq.).

⁶⁴ R. Brubaker, “Aftermaths of Empire and the Unmixing of Peoples”, in: Barkey/ von Hagen, see note 63, 155 et seq. (157).

⁶⁵ Barkey, see note 63, 103.

needs an individual counter-elite⁶⁶ which complicates matters for the political leadership directing the transition process. For any intervening power, it would therefore be advisable to limit the number of transition processes it has to set in motion to a necessary minimum.

In determining the priorities, the availability of a counter-elite should be given due consideration. Installing the counter-elite, however, should not take on the form of simply replacing one body of thought by another. Ultimately, the long-term success of any transition depends on the desire of most domestic parties to reach a settlement – in this context, a “respected central authority figure” can be of use in preventing the process reaching a stalemate.⁶⁷

Considering the legacy of multi-national states, it would be possible to tentatively conclude that a peaceful process of ethnic “unmixing” should not be ruled out as one of the consequences of intervention. Obviously, this is a highly problematic point but the seemingly endless international involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo does not appear to be a convincing solution, either. Both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo also highlight circumstances in which the rebuilding of elite consensus under the tutelage of third powers is particularly difficult. *Brubaker* observes:

“[W]ars fought in the name of national self-determination, where the national ‘self’ in question is conceived in ethnic rather than civic terms, but where the population is intricately intermixed, *are* likely to engender ethnic unmixing through migration, murder, or some combination of both.”⁶⁸

In circumstances like this, it might make more sense to focus on nation-building within each of the concerned national groups in order to prevent future violence. This might either be the first step in a process of establishing separate states, or, indeed, a preparatory phase for some kind of common statehood. As cases like Bosnia and Kosovo illustrate, there appears to be a certain hesitation on the part of the international community to move in this direction. Understandably, no-one wishes to be seen as condoning the politics of ethnic violence. The real prob-

⁶⁶ According to the definition of elite employed in this paper (see note 41), a counter-elite differs from an elite in so far as its members have the same potential for leadership as members of the elite do, but are not in positions to exercise this leadership.

⁶⁷ Y. Shain/ J.J. Linz, *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions*, 1995, 75.

⁶⁸ Brubaker, see note 64, 158.

lem, however, is not with the international community, but with the parties themselves: there are grave doubts as to whether the communities in Bosnia or Kosovo actually want to live together. To ignore this would mean to keep alive the reasons which led to the conflict and to intervention in the first place. At any rate, a successful separate establishment of democracy and the rule of law would probably increase the chances of a future together rather than decrease them. The peaceful and negotiated separation of Czechs and Slovaks has not led to a decrease in stability, for example. On the contrary, by resolving the problem the potential for instability was greatly reduced. Taking such a course in the context of intervention or occupation would have the additional advantage of the occupational forces not having to appear as perpetuating the repressive previous system. In a situation charged with aggressive national sentiment, any attempt on the part of outsiders to prescribe the outcome of national self-determination would be doomed to failure.

In order to nudge the parties towards working and living together, it can be helpful to encourage and support some members of the formerly imperial elite to take on an active role in the elites of their respective communities. As they have been trained, socialized, and politicized within the wider frame of reference of empire, they might form a useful link with the other communities. Such a program would have to depend on the preparedness of imperial elite members to adapt to the changed political and ideological circumstances. Since their status is severely threatened by imperial collapse, readiness to embrace the new framework might be greater than would initially appear.⁶⁹

This strategy of separate nation-building need not be confined to cases like Bosnia. In particular the protracted dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the peace treaties after World War I have not established well functioning liberal and democratic nation-states. Several communities forced to live in the same state do not make a nation. In fact, the removal of the old order might be an opening to resolve a number of even older conflicts for good.

What should, therefore, be done within a particular community? Probably the most important task would be to encourage the elite to construct a new usable past featuring the intervention itself as a positive event. Crucial to this process would be to support and encourage the counter-elites to convince moderate members of the old elite to change their views. Granting access to information and a general transparency

⁶⁹ Barkey, see note 63.

in the conduct of the occupation can help facilitate this process. It would also be beneficial to create an institutional framework for the debate about the historical experience. As elites functioning within institutions are perceived to be strong this would amplify their influence among other groups according to the *framing* concept mentioned above.⁷⁰ In addition, this might be the suitable framework for a dialogue about the aims of the occupation between occupiers and occupied. Dialogue about the future status of the community concerned is a key element in avoiding general frustration among the occupied with values such as democracy, market economy or human rights represented and invoked by the occupying forces in order to legitimize their intervention. The dangers of avoiding such a dialogue are made clear in the 2001-2002 report of the Ombudsperson for monitoring human rights in Kosovo:

“UNMIK is not structured according to democratic principles, does not function in accordance with the rule of law, and does not respect important international human rights norms. The people of Kosovo are therefore deprived of protection of their basic rights and freedoms three years after the end of the conflict by the very entity set up to guarantee them.”⁷¹

Whether a transfer of those values and their injection in the local nation-building process can be achieved, is, of course, the key question. Following from what has been presented in this paper, it does not come as a surprise that there is no instant solution available. Nations have been built over many decades if not centuries, and it would be naïve to assume that such a process would be quicker or easier outside Europe.

In the long term, nation-building as a foreign policy tool will only be successful if the West can win the argument and convince other nations that adopting Western values is not only beneficial to them in political or economic terms, but compatible with their national identity as well. This, however, requires considerable effort over a long period of time in an area which is usually not a vote-winner in elections: education.

Perhaps the most important transition to be triggered by intervention must be one towards substantial improvements and changes in the

⁷⁰ Barkey, see note 63, 110.

⁷¹ Ombudsperson Institution in Kosovo, *Second Annual Report 2001-2002*, <www.ombudspersonkosovo.org>, quoted in: S. Chesterman, *You, the People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building*, 2004, 126.

education system. Teachers will have to be retrained, libraries and other information systems must be expanded, and exchange program for students and faculties should be supported. There are a number of Western universities in the Middle East, Asia and Eastern Europe – their profile must be raised and their resources increased. An important aspect of this academic offensive must be that it is a *real* debate between equals. If the West wishes to be convincing then it must be possible to convince the West, too. It may seem ironic but in order to spread Western values it is necessary to discontinue the claim that they are universal.⁷²

All this may sound idealistic and far removed from the realm of *realpolitik*. There is, however, one outstanding example where all this has worked: British colonial rule in India. Before the British arrived, there was no “Indian” identity in a subcontinent scattered with hundreds of sovereign states and a multitude of religious and linguistic communities.⁷³ In order to legitimize their rule, however, the British reacted to a number of different local traditions and rituals associated with representing authority and reassembled them in new rituals for their own ends. *Bernard Cohn* points out that it was by means of this process that an all-Indian political ‘language’ was created which, in the 20th century, was employed by the early Indian national movement in order to describe their aim of independence. The fact that elite families sent their sons to prestigious British universities where they were able to gain first hand experience of British life played a major role in the transfer of nationalism from Europe to India.⁷⁴ Perhaps, this is the intellectual background to the recently fashionable use of the term ‘recolonization’.⁷⁵ It should not be overlooked, however, that it took the British 250 years to create this identity. Still, in abstract terms, this could be regarded as more or less successful nation-building exercise by intervention.

⁷² Fukuyama, see note 48, 160. A perfect example of this claim is G.W. Bush, “State of the Union Address” (Washington, DC, 29 January 2002), <www.whitehouse.gov>.

⁷³ On India, see R.L. Hardgrave, Jr., “India: The Dilemmas of Diversity”, in: Diamond/ Plattner, see note 46, 71 et seq. See also: R.B. Inden, *Imagining India*, 1990; V. Das (ed.), *Tradition, Pluralism, and Identity*, 1999; G.D. Sontheimer/ H. Kulke (eds), *Hinduism Reconsidered*, 1989.

⁷⁴ B.S. Cohn, “Representing Authority in Victorian India”, in: B.S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, 1987, 632 et seq. (678). See also A. Appadorai, *Documents on Political Thought in Modern India*, 1977.

⁷⁵ Fukuyama, see note 48, 138.

Ultimately, however, it is necessary to accept independence. The history of post-colonial India suggests that democracy and the rule of law, however imperfectly they may be practiced, can lead to a certain degree of stability. What cannot be expected, though, is the pursuit of a particular foreign policy according to Western interests as the Indian example shows as well.

Moreover, it is necessary to accept nationalism as a modernizing concept in response to a perceived cultural and economic threat. Particularly in the third world and to a lesser degree in Eastern Europe and Russia, nationalism is a reaction to backwardness relative to Western Europe and North America. Western values are rejected in defense of a local culture, and nationalism is employed in order to project a vision of modernity independent of Western culture. Against this background, it is crucial to work against the powers of *ressentiment* by establishing clear rules of conduct for all members of the occupying forces. Most importantly, the forces must be accountable and seen to be accountable.⁷⁶ In order to demonstrate to the public equality before the law, it might be helpful to set up joint courts of justice designated to deal with crimes concerning members of the occupying forces and the local population.

The dangers of not developing an active strategy against *ressentiment* should not be underestimated. In his 2001 New Year's address, East Timorese president *Xanana Gusmão* complained about the phenomenon "of an obsessive acculturation" to values imposed from abroad:

"[The East Timorese] are hungry for values: democracy (many of those who teach us never practiced it in their own countries because they became UN staff members); human rights (many of those who remind us of them forget the situation in their own countries); gender (many of the women who attend the workshops know that in their countries this issue is no example for others) [...]. It might sound as though I am speaking against these noble values of democratic participation. I do not mind if it happens in the democratic minds of the people. What seems to be absurd is that we absorb standards just to pretend we look like a democratic society and please our masters of independence."⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Chesterman, see note 71, 145-146.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Chesterman, see note 71, 141-142.

This impressive example of *ressentiment* could, as we have seen, very easily develop into a nucleus of a future nationalism rejecting Western values *in toto*. Seen as such, it only highlights the importance of a meaningful cultural dialogue in which no party should be beyond criticism.

More importantly, however, this speech and the dangers it heralds are a convincing argument to revisit the politics of national self-determination. It does not appear to make sense to ignore the more recent scholarship on nations and nationalism when having to deal with the issue in the international arena over and over again. If nations really are a mode of self-perception, then it is impossible to apply so-called objective criteria from outside in order to deal with them in terms of foreign policy. An admittedly radical new approach would therefore be to recognize as a nation every community defining themselves as a nation. This would have to include the right to self-determination and independence. Obviously, this would imply a major foreign policy revolution raising grave doubts about the legitimacy of a number of European nation states as well. There are, therefore, arguments against recognizing those nations as independent states – but those are political ones and they should be clearly identified as such. It would be possible to recognize the *nationhood* of a particular community without necessarily having to support or advocate independent *statehood* at the same time. Recognition is a decisive component of all attempts to influence the direction and pace of a particular nation-building process. To recognize the nationhood of a particular community can be helpful in defusing the dangers of *ressentiment*. Only then is a cultural and political dialogue possible which may create openings for influencing the process as a whole. As we have seen, nations do not appear from nowhere but rather constitute a self-image of a community's past, present, and future. Without recognizing nations as such and respecting their self-proclaimed uniqueness and antiquity, influencing nation-building from the outside is impossible.

