

## Debate

# Can Nationalism Studies and Ethnic/Racial Studies be Brought Together?

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*In order to overcome the conceptual debacle facing both Nationalism Studies and Ethnic/Racial Studies, we have to make sense of the terminological ambiguities still hampering mutual comprehension. This short article will focus on the common ground shared by the two disciplines, both of which participate in a common interest in ethnicity. Most of my theoretical sources admittedly consist of nationalism studies and ethnic conflict literature. On the basis of explanatory weight, methodological affinities and a shared conceptual baggage, I shall stress the need to keep nationalism and ethnic/racial studies together.*

*Keywords: Ethnicity; Nationhood; Nationality; Nationalism; Patriotism; Culture*

### **Ethnicity vs Nationhood?**

Michael Banton's statement 'that the adjective *ethnic* is now applied to groups that do not seek independence as nations' clearly addresses the core of the issue: whereas *nation* is a political concept, *ethnic group* is not. In other words, ethnicity is pre-political. It would be impossible to envisage a nation devoid of a political dimension and deprived of its own political programme. Not so for an ethnic group. Nationalism was unimaginable before the advent of the modern centralised state in Western Europe. The latter's advent resulted in a scramble for recognition of previously stateless groups. The pre-political form of nationalism was *ethnocentrism* (Smith 1972, 1999). It may be devoid of a clearly formulated political programme, but it was embodied within a long-established set of practices, customs, attitudes and traditions.

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As pointed out by Banton, it is possible to adopt two distinctive approaches in social science. In synthesis, the '*emic*' approach is the perspective of the insider, of the native; the '*etic*' view is the perspective of the outsider, of the researcher who, among other things, looks for universals and grand generalisations.<sup>1</sup> When the linguist and Christian missionary Kenneth Lee Pike (1967) coined the neologisms *emic* and *etic*, he derived them from an analogy with the standard phonemic/phonetic distinction in linguistics. Linguistics is no doubt the most 'scientific' of all human sciences. Methodologically, Pikes' distinction is a crucial one and has been formulated in a variety of ways in anthropology and other social sciences—inspiring, among other things, the insider/outsider debate, which also informs many of the contributions of this issue.

Nationalists typically argue that the nation is a substantive, tangible entity. But, from an external observer's viewpoint, the nation could be more modestly conceived as the subjective manifestation of a political idea and as a type of collective consciousness. Walker Connor's well-known definition of the nation as a 'self-aware ethnic group' addresses precisely this dimension. *Self-awareness* refers to a new way of seeing the world and one's own group. This new way is necessarily embodied in a political programme, whose ultimate goal is the seizure of power in its contemporary, present-day avatar, the modern state—even though a well-thought federal arrangement can usually accommodate most nationalist demands (Coakley 2003).

Of course, the centrality of this highly personalistic/personalised and subjectivist dimension raises methodological questions for the external observer. The main problem is conceptual: the nation cannot be defined, since it defines. More precisely, it eludes definition, because it is itself a tool of definition (Conversi 1995). To define means, above all, to establish a boundary around the entity to be defined, that is, a distinction between insiders and outsiders. Both group formation (the *emic* dimension), however 'open' or loosened a group might be or claim to be, and the social scientists' use of taxonomies, name-calling and categorisation (the *etic* dimension), have an inevitable outcome: inclusion *via* exclusion. From whatever angle we approach nationalism, we end up constructing exclusivist categories while erecting our own boundaries.

However, it would be equally difficult to argue that the concept of *ethnic group* is exempt from the same conceptual problems. Once upon a time, anthropologists believed they could categorise entire societies and cultures from the outside on the basis of objective traits. The old tradition of identifying the observed with reality *tout court*, without awareness of the observer's own selective tastes, perceptions and prejudices, is now militantly eschewed by anthropologists and other social scientists. At least since Edmund Leach (1986), anthropologists have slowly changed their tack, preferring to emphasise social processes rather than cultural traits. Max Gluckman (1956) identified the relational character of ethnic identities, whereas Evans-Pritchard (1951) focused on groups' self-perception. But it was probably Frederick Barth's (1969) work on ethnic boundaries that most contributed to this 'paradigm shift'. Once *ethnic boundaries* become conceptually distinguished from *ethnic content*, we find ourselves one step away from arguing that the subjective or *emic* approach

is central to the structuring of social organisation, and particularly of the self-defining boundary. *We* think, therefore *we* are. *We* see ourselves as ‘us’, so *we* are ‘us’. Maybe others do not see ‘us’ as a collective entity, but surely *we* do. This may apply to both national and pre-national societies. The porousness of ethnic boundaries makes ethnic loyalties no less un-identifiable than national ones, indeed much more so.

The most important rationale for justifying the joint investigation of ethnicity and nationalism lies in the two terms’ common roots. Scholars of nationalism are by now well aware of the remote origins of the term *nation* in the Latin verb *nasci*, ‘be born’ (Connor 2002: 25; Fenton 2003: 13–24). The same verb is at the root of several derivative terms, including *native*, *nature*, *naive*, *cognate*, *innate*, *nascent*, *natal*, *noel*, *pregnant*, and *renaissance*.<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, *ethnic* comes from Greek *ethnos*, already associated in its original Greek connotation with the idea of common descent and lineage. Classical authors used it to refer to contiguous peoples, and it is rendered by the 1998 version of *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* as ‘nation’ (see also Fenton 2003: 14). It was used in the Septuagint translation to render the Hebrew *goyim* (pl. of *goy*) ‘nation’, especially of non-Israelites, hence *Gentile* nation. During the Middle Ages the term came to connote pagans, heathens and infidels, broadly ‘the other’, following the Biblical translation. From the Greek version of the *Septuagint* came the Latinised ‘*ethnicus*’ for pagan. The term was only re-captured in its original non-religious meaning since the mid-nineteenth century. Broadly, the Greek *ethnos* stood for people, nation, even race and class, but always in relation to lineage, origin, or pedigree.

Thus, the central feature for both nationhood and ethnicity is common descent. Given this shared etymological heritage, one must emphasise the need for joint investigation in ethnic/racial studies and nationalism studies—and, possibly, some joint agreement over use of concepts and terminology. This is, I believe, a trend which has been already embraced by some of the founding fathers of ethnic/racial studies, in particular John Stone (1998) and John Rex (1993, 1996). Yet it is still resisted by others who, often on spurious ideological grounds, persist in the deeply ingrained belief that nationalism studies actually or covertly promote nationalism, hence xenophobia. This is most often a myth, and the few inevitable exceptions should be promptly identified. Methodologically, there is an obvious need for common partnership, since the two areas’ subject matters and topics of investigation are part of a continuum, rather than belonging to two neatly defined fields. However, I will now underscore a much more substantial opposition, the one between ethnicity and culture.

### **Ethnicity vs Culture?**

Few, if any, scholars have noticed that *nation* shares a common etymological root with *nature*. Its Middle-English usage denoted a person’s ‘physical power’. This came via Old French from the Latin *natura*, ‘birth, nature, quality’. Like *nation*, the ultimate root was *nat-* (born) and its accompanying verb *nasci*. On the other hand, we know well about the classical *nature* versus *nurture* opposition, recasted by others

as ‘genetics versus environment’, or ‘determinism versus free will’. It was Charles Darwin’s cousin Francis Galton, the founder of *eugenics*, who in 1874 first conceived this contrast in nearly irreconcilable terms.<sup>3</sup> Nurture conveys care and support for growth, coming from the Latin *nutrire* (feed, nourish) via the old French *noureture* (nourishment)—the same root of terms such as *nurse* and *nursery* (Old French *nourice*).

But nurture or nourishment would be unattainable without a vital human activity: *cultivation*. The Latin term *cultura* originally stood for ‘cultivation of the soil’ as derived from *colere* (to tend, cultivate). The goal of cultivation was, of course, nurture. Thus, culture served to nourish the body and, by metaphysical extension, the soul and the intellect: by at least the nineteenth century, culture began to be used in relation to ‘cultivating’ the spirit, the mind, and, most important, one’s manners and customs. Mind, body and spirit all required cultural activities and exertions for their optimal maintenance. The abandonment of culture would inevitably lead to deprivation, loss and, finally, extinction.

Culture is an open concept. The open legacy offered by culture can be opposed to the deterministic and closed-ended heritage associated with ethnicity and nationhood: if culture is choice and nature is destiny, then we simply have to elect between an open and a closed concept—indeed, a choice between choice and non-choice. Modern theories of human behaviour have long debated over the primacy to be attributed to either. These contrasting world visions, one firmly believing in the power of inheritance, the other in the power of knowledge, have tackled each other for centuries. Enlightenment philosophers believed solidly in the power of education. David Hume, who was probably Ernest Gellner’s major philosophical muse, thought that all knowledge came from experience. Since Darwin, the pendulum has swung the other way towards a reassertion of nature over nurture, till the deterministic extremes of Social Darwinism. In contemporary linguistics, Noam Chomsky has argued that there are *innate*, hence universal, features in the way we see the world and even generate our grammar and linguistic rules (*innatism*), although they may be modifiable by interactions with family, education, media and society. However, more recent research developments in another field, *genetics*, have shown that we have far fewer genes than expected: these findings suggest that environmental influences play a greater role in our development than was previously believed.<sup>4</sup> Few social scientists would opt for a purely bio-genetic approach, and there is awareness about the interactions taking place between nature and nurture. On the other hand, there is still resistance to see humans as ‘a *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, written upon by experience’ (Steen 1996: 21).

To sum up, nurture inescapably refers to culture. One more dichotomy, then? In his review of Matt Ridley’s (2003) *Nature via Nurture*, Steven Rose complains that ‘for at least 20 years some of us have been trying patiently to explain why it is time to bury the so-called nature/nurture dichotomy as a hangover from an earlier phase of science’, arguing instead that ‘living organisms construct themselves out of the raw materials provided by both genome and context’.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, culture has now again changed meaning and undergone a semiotic mutation

which makes it hardly assimilable to, or congruent with, previous meanings. Despite a proliferation of writings on culture, the latter remains one of the most difficult concepts to grasp and define in the social sciences. Already by the 1950s the US anthropologists Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn were able to identify over 100 competing definitions of 'culture' (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952).

The rise of *cultural studies* as a self-standing discipline in the 1960s should have in principle contributed to clarify this conundrum, having elected it as its central topic of investigation. Unfortunately, the opposite is true. Despite its promising beginnings under the brilliant stewardship of Richard Hoggart and others (Sardar and Van Loon 1998), the disarray has progressively amplified, degenerating into conceptual chaos and turning cultural studies into one of the most confused and confusing disciplines on earth. Instead of being rigorously defined, the concept of culture has become so flexible and muddled as to include virtually every aspect and form of human behaviour.<sup>6</sup> 'Culture' has therefore fragmented into its constituent parts, an amalgam of infinite particles now dissolving into idiosyncratic chaos. At the moment, everything can become 'culture' from 'youth culture' to 'drug culture', from 'consumer culture' to pop culture, 'yob' culture, hooligan culture, and, perhaps a short step from hooliganism, animals' culture. Yet, all of these 'cultures' fall short of the main distinguishing criterion, inter-generational continuity. There is currently an urgent need to go back to the concept of culture in its original meaning of *cultivating* and hence nourishing. Culture should be linked to material, rather than biological, inheritance. In short, a sense of continuity is inseparable from culture, hence culture can only exist if it is transmitted through generations.<sup>7</sup>

Interestingly, this is what makes it so easily confused with ethnicity. Ethnicity and culture are often seen as intrinsically linked, one reinforcing the other (Fenton 2003: 20–3). In extreme cases, ethnicity and culture are conflated as nearly synonymous: the very use of the term *ethno-cultural* is a clue to such a confusion. This can lead to enormous distortions of reality in which political conflicts are reified first as being fundamentally ethnic, then as being cultural. Once conflict becomes 'ethno-cultural', it is a short step from talking about 'culture wars', as in the most parochial US media and academia. And, if conflicts which are inherently political are explained away in terms of 'ethno-cultural' essence, then no conflict can be resolved without extirpating the troublesome 'culture' identified as the 'cause' of the conflict, therefore engaging in open assimilationist projects.

To eliminate the confusion between ethnicity and culture, continuity (which is common to both) has to be paired to *creativity*. Culture manifests itself in the intersection between continuity and creativity. It is simply not enough to pass a cultural item through generations, this needs to be enriched and matched with changing conditions through creativity and adaptation.

In order to re-appropriate ourselves of the pristine meaning of culture, the first task should be to rescue it from the fetters of fashionable post-modernist mumbo-jumbo. In true consumerist spirit, the cultural studies coterie has thrived on ever-changing ambiguity, imprecision and vagueness—in practice, if not in theory, surrendering its critical capacities. Ernest Gellner, possibly the greatest nostalgic of

modernity, argued that for post-modernists ‘everything goes’ (Gellner 1995). Yet, the post-modernism which imbues cultural studies may well be part of a broader paradigm shift towards something else, which we are still unable to identify. It indicates a saturation with the rigid patterns of modernity and the monolithism of classical procedures of analysis. But its conceptual obscureness has failed so far to direct us towards a more constructive engagement with social reality.

The concept of culture has been much more rigorously circumscribed and applied by political philosophers, especially representatives of the ‘*multiculturalist* school’ (Kymlicka 1995; Patten and Kymlicka 2003). The cultural *droit à la différence* is now theorised and accepted as fully belonging to liberal thought and as a prerequisite for the practice of any viable liberal–democratic state.

Having previously admitted that the concept of culture is amongst the most difficult to define, we should however attempt to introduce a working definition, at least in opposition to ethnicity. This may allow us to operate within a more clearly defined framework which could be easily used in comparative studies. As I have stressed in the volume under review (Conversi 2002b: 273), *ethnicity* can be more easily defined as a group’s shared and subjective belief in putative descent, whereas *culture* can be identified in the objective existence of an innerly coherent, yet plural, set of tangible outputs (including material artifacts) whose proper crafting is passed on through generations (and renewed with each generation) within a system of values and codes conveyed by its own symbolism.<sup>8</sup> Of course, culture needs reproduction and inter-generational transmission in order to survive and thus is permeated by ethnicity. But, although culture is attached to ethnic continuity, the two concepts should always be distinguished.

Returning to the ‘nature’ side of the opposition, the use of associated terms, such as ‘native’, also conceals an exclusivist and closed inner self. Why do some academics speak about a person *going native* in disparaging or ironic terms? An Englishman who travels to the Costa del Sol and becomes entangled in a passion for flamenco or *cante hondo* can be typified as ‘going native’. Such an ‘un-English’ behaviour is rebuked under the assumption that the proper Englishman would travel with packs of lager and visit local ‘English’ pubs without truly mixing with the natives. In English, *naïve* and *naïveté* are also etymologically related to native, precisely from the Latin *nativus* ‘local, born in the place, autochthonous, rustic’—the same root as nationalism. The occasionally ironic undertone of the expression ‘going native’ is associated to a presumption of ethnic (or other) superiority, as if ‘natives’ could endanger our own purity. There is hence a sense that one brings with him/her one’s own culture all the time. This can easily transcend into treating culture as a rigid entity and into attaching culture to that particular individual, nearly as part of one’s body; that is, in nearly essentialist terms. There is an expectation that the dominant culture is not simply transmitted on to the next generations (which is what culture is truly about), but also that the single individual brings it with him/her forever. The ‘ethno-cultural’ individual thus conceived cannot belong to other cultures except as a consumer. But consuming particular items of another culture, from ethnic food to

ethnic dress, is tantamount to temporarily 'borrowing' from another culture, rather than belonging to it, merging into it, or taking part in it.

To resume, culture is attached to ethnicity at the risk of obliterating creativity and adaptation. No doubt, continuity is central to it. But culture should also stress the voluntaristic aspect of one's identity simultaneously with inter-generational transmission.

Ethnicity, nations, and 'nature' all seem to imply an absence of free will. On the other hand, they often form the basis upon which individuals are segregated (either *hetero-segregated* or *self-segregated*, to paraphrase Walker Connor). This perception, of course, lies at the opposite of the idea of *self-determination*, so often associated with free will and the exercise of democratic rights. The problem remains in the relationship between the individual and the larger society or collectivity, that is, the 'self' which is to be determined. This relationship can be entered upon on the basis of a contract (citizenship) or of elective rights (nation- and ethnic-related categories). In both instances the relationship is binding, but in the latter case there is no opt-out clause: once in, never out; once a member, always a member.

This will bring us forward to the next section, where I shall reintroduce the need to reconsider the connection between ethnicity, nationalism and the third term of the triad, patriotism.

### **(Ethno-) Nationalism vs Patriotism?**

Can patriotism be separated from nationalism? Walker Connor (2002) clearly distinguishes between the two. Connor employs the terms *state-nationalism* or '*patriotism* to refer to state-loyalty, and *ethnonationalism* to refer to loyalty to the nation' (Connor 2002: 24).<sup>9</sup> For him, 'all nationalism is ethnically predicated, and those who employ the term nationalism to refer to a civic identity or civic loyalty are confusing *patriotism* with nationalism. *Ethnos* and *nation* are equivalents: the former derived from ancient Greek, the latter from Latin. It follows that the term *ethnonationalism* is largely tautological, since ethnicity permeates nationalism anyway' (Conversi 2002a: 3). In his critique of Connor, Anthony D. Smith evokes this distinction as the one intercurring between '*patriotism*, the love of the territorial state, and *nationalism*, the love of the ethnic nation. Thus, we may speak of British patriotism, but only of English (or Scottish or Welsh or Irish) nationalism' (Smith 2002: 55).

However, the two notions have common semantic roots. The *patria* (fatherland) has obvious familistic, kin-like connotations. Patriotism's kinship-like features are manifested in the terms to which it is etymologically related: '*patriarchalism*', '*patron*', '*patronage*', '*patrician*', '*patrimony*', and so on, with '*pater*' (father) as the common denominator. It is the state that is usually portrayed in strong, manly, obedience-commanding terms, whereas the nation remains shrouded in feminine, unmanly attributes. The 'fatherland' has clearly masculine connotations, as opposed to the '*nation*', often depicted with mother-like features. Neo-Latin hybrid coinings such as the Italian/Spanish *patria* or the French *patrie* (both in the feminine), seem

to conjugate the feminine with the masculine in an attempt to bring down to earth the metaphysical, sublime and God-like features of the national imagery required by the state from its devoted citizens. In other words, blind devotion is due to the state (masculine) in virtue of its embodiment of the nation (feminine). Both the *patria* and the nation are not just Janus-faced (Nairn 1997), but, like modern Deities, they are also androgynous.

Patriotism simply stresses further the masculine aspects of nationalism. If so, can patriotism be really 'civic'? Universalist thinkers, from Leo Tolstoy to Martha Nussbaum, have condemned patriotism for its unfulfilled promises and tragic consequences. In its practical effects, patriotism can be hardly distinguishable from nationalism or ethnonationalism. Indeed, if the distinctive feature of patriotic fervour, as opposed to more general nationalist passions in general, is loyalty to the state, then patriotism can also muster an oppressive apparatus which stateless nations may only aspire to. Hence, the consequences of patriotism can be much more dangerous and devastating than those of ethnonationalism. Leo Tolstoy's (1828–1910) indictment of patriotism in 1900 recognised this unsurmountable limit, defining patriotism as 'a cruel tradition surviving from an outlived past' (Tolstoy 1969).<sup>10</sup> More recently, Michael Billig's (1995) vision of '*banal nationalism*' clearly refers to the dangers of sub-conscious, irreflexive, everyday patriotism, specifically British/American patriotism. Andrew Vincent (2002) has also stressed the affinities between nationalism and patriotism. Finally, Billig has observed that 'in view of recent turns in American politics the distinction is looking increasingly dodgy.'<sup>11</sup>

The prototypical patriotic country is no doubt the United States of America. Already by the early nineteenth century Alexis de Tocqueville (1805–59) detected the collective *ethos* underpinning most social and political activities in America.<sup>12</sup> This 'collectivist' vision has persisted and even thrived in a media-manipulated society. However, the 'communitarian' ideal, more recently defended by mainstream US scholars such as Amitai Etzioni and Robert D. Putnam, conceals an all-pervasive practice of social control. The resulting lack of individual freedom has been shrouded by the countervailing myth that America is an 'individualist' society, in which the individual is valued and esteemed above everything else (Shain 1996). How much is this ideal far from the truth? Many authors have argued that the individual as an autonomous, free-thinking subject has suffered a fatal blow under the US media's post-9/11 regime of mass hysteria. Popular TV tear-jerking shows, such as Jerry Springer, Oprah, and 'real TV' pop-psych bromides, display a daily ratio of quintessentially middle-American lust for vengeance and punishment wrapped in patriotic fervour with vitriolic inflections. The recent trial of John Walker Lindh, aka 'Johnny the Taliban', a US citizen who freely converted to Islam and was casually captured by US forces during the US invasion of Afghanistan, was a quintessential example of the magnified anti-individualist trend emerging in contemporary American society. Displayed like a circus freak in front of a hostile public opinion despite allegations of torture, the Lindh drama performed a clear 'thought-control' function (Chomsky 1989; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Lukes 1974, 1986). This function was efficiently implemented as for over a year the whole



country turned into a 'confessing society', with public law recalling the Stalinist show trials which induced people to admit their deviance from the 'party line'. A fully-fledged democratic society should be aware that any 'truth' extracted by public confession can only operate within polarised and non-democratic power relations, while truth extracted by the use of torture has hardly any legal validity.<sup>13</sup> However, the all-pervasive emphasis on patriotism, coupled with media-induced terror and fear, has the power to obliterate normal human reactions and relations. Xenophobia is at the core of this variety of patriotism, but its victims are simultaneously ethnic others and ideological others. Said differently, the fatherland's enemies are not only foreigners, but individuals who dare to think differently by deviating from orthodoxy (or from the 'party line', if the US could ever be described as a *de facto* one-party state). 'Johnny the Taliban' was indeed accused of both in virtue of his ultimate act of defiance of 'going native'. He had dared to abjure supposedly good age-old American patriotic virtues by merging into a Central Asian local culture. This is itself a mortal sin for a patriotic regime which has made of anti-relativism its rallying call. No consideration has been given to the thought that Lindh may have done so precisely because he believed in those fundamental individual freedoms of religion and opinion which are usually invoked by US patriots, at least while on the defensive. Whereas the US Constitution's universally heralded system of 'checks and balances' was deemed to uphold the right of all citizens, irrespective of their beliefs and ethnic origins, the post-9/11 'ethno-patriotic' mood gripping the country has seemingly obliterated its allegedly civic component (Swain 2002).

The 'ethnic' core of American patriotism unveils itself through discourses of common descent punctuated by references to the Mayflower and the Pilgrim Fathers, in which the United States are invariably portrayed in eschatological terms as the Promised Land, an earthly paradise of justice and peace. The accompanying religious myth of 'chosenness' is a driving and all-powerful force of ideological domination, whether or not is it officially conceived in 'ethnic' terms. In the footsteps of Adrian Hastings (1997), the British writer and journalist Clifford Longley has claimed that, more than the English, the Americans have long conceived themselves as God's Chosen People (Longley 2003).<sup>14</sup> The latter myth is easily transmitted to successive immigrant waves from different ethnic backgrounds, making the religious dimension apparently more important than the 'ethnic' one. Indeed, in common usage the very mention of the term 'ethnicity' refers restrictively to the immigrants' own background before arrival. But, however ingrained, this remains a rhetorical device based largely on a 'necessary' myth of political citizenship: the parallel fiction of shared descent, even if solely ideological, can be discerned through regular references to the first colonists and common 'ancestors'. At its core, lies the WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) ethnicity. The more one moves up through the social hierarchy, the more ethnic and exclusivist this supposedly sharable identity reveals itself to be—a theory corroborated perhaps by the fact that the only non-Protestant President, John F. Kennedy, was assassinated. The Bush administration had recently to conciliate this central role of WASP ethnicity with the post-9/11 need for 'community building' (incidentally, just at a time in which the

misnomer 'nation-building' was being applied to post-invasion Iraq and Afghanistan). However, it has been compounded by a tacit campaign against ethnic and even religious minorities, including US Catholics. The term *xeno-racism* (Fekete 2001; Sivanandan 2001) can better identify the new forms of discrimination and prejudice directed against neighbours and 'next of kin' who become 'racialised' even as, indeed particularly if, they look alike.

Within this peculiar ethno-religious *Weltanschauung*, the religious element prevails over the ethnic one, assuming most often the form of an ideological crusade pervaded by missionary zeal. Since American society and culture are supposed to be universally good and globally superior, the Lindh trial was seen as exemplary of what might happen to young Americans swerved by 'fanatics' or corrupted by 'alien mores'. Although the trial was presented as a matter of national security, the message and its effects produced an immediate heightening of xenophobic intolerance in the name of American patriotism.

Is American patriotism truly unique? Is it different from other historical varieties of patriotism? What are its distinguishing features? The answers to these questions may well be encapsulated in the very concept of American *exceptionalism*, the doctrine that the United States of America is unique among nations, a belief bestowing on it a sort of divine right to engage in global domination as a sacred duty. The accompanying military doctrine of American *unilateralism* can exclusively work in a *uni-polar* world where only one form of patriotism (seems to) remain unchallenged. Moreover, its position as the global hegemon makes it a potentially lethal force, whether through *intervention* (Chomsky 1989) or, as argued by others, by *non-intervention* (Power 2003). According to an increasing number of scholars, the resulting sense of threat, amplified by the aggressive spread and imposition of US consumerist items, has reconfigured US patriotism as an unprecedented menace to the rest of mankind (see Sardar and Davies 2002). In this sense, American patriotism turns truly peculiar and its consequences can be even more aberrant (Billig 1995: 154–73). Being traditionally associated with imperial expansion, it swings between being a doctrine of *empire* (embraced by the apologists of globalisation as manifest destiny) and a practice of *national supremacy* (openly advocated by communitarian philosophers), with continuous incursions into the realm of *ethnocentrism* (Billig 1995) and *white supremacy* (Swain 2002).<sup>15</sup>

In all these aspects, American patriotism may be *sui generis*. However, this does not contravene my main argument that patriotism *in general* shares more in common with ethnic exclusivism, xenophobia and racism than other varieties or aspects of nationalism. This is not a unique American characteristic. Within the 'structure of opportunities' enacted by US-led globalisation, American patriotism simply has had a better chance to emerge vigorously before the fearful gaze of non-Americans. Given these opportunities, it could perform its task on the global stage more openly and unchallengedly than lesser-known, underlying, recalcitrant and semi-subdued varieties of patriotism.

To recapitulate my position, patriotism and nationalism are indissociable. There

is no evidence that patriotism is more tolerant, open and 'civic' than nationalism in general or ethnonationalism in particular. Indeed, since patriotism refers to state loyalty, it has the potential of being much more destructive than average anti-state ethnonationalism.

A final concept employed by Banton in his reading of *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World* (Spira 2002) needs to be addressed in: the remaining section, I will explain why the term *nationality* should be eschewed as much as possible in socio-political theory, although it can be used contextually.

### **Nationality: Is This a Useful Concept?**

We have talked about ethnicity, culture and patriotism. Where does 'nationality' come in? The term *nationality* has often been used by political actors to circumvent practical obstacles on the road to national 'self-awareness'. It is a low-key, half-muted expression where a particular nationally-defined group is recognised as having collective rights, but of a lesser intensity and at a lower level than the 'titular' nation. For instance, the Spanish Constitution (1978) acknowledges the collective rights of Spain's constituent 'nationalities', while the core Spanish (Castilian) 'nation' remains firmly at centre stage (Conversi 1997, 2002c). Yet, this official discourse has been opposed by a peripheral discourse in which non-state nationalist groups speak of four equally legitimated nations (Castilian/Spanish, Catalan, Basque and Galician), rather than three 'nationalities' and one 'nation' (Spain).<sup>16</sup> The original concept was introduced in the pre-Constitutional debate by *Marxisante* law-makers who, taking heed from Leninist concepts, believed in the simultaneous need to stress state unity and accommodate peripheral aspirations.<sup>17</sup>

For the international scholar, the term 'nationality' is a double-edged sword, whose use cannot be sustained coherently. It is simply a local, situational and watered-down synonym of 'nation'. Moreover, the term 'nationality' is stamped on many passports and various official documents to indicate *citizenship*, that is, a legal relationship of right and duties with the state, the political unit and land where one lives. More confusingly, in countries where the *ius sanguinis* prevails over the *ius soli*, the declared nationality stamped on one's passport may indicate ethnic origin, and may have occasionally legal implications, including reduced citizenship rights. The only possible use is therefore contextual. Because the nation is already hardly definable, the term 'nationality' only adds to the confusion. One can use the term 'nationality' to analyse, for instance, the impact of the Spanish Constitution on inter-ethnic relations, but it would be inappropriate or incongruous to use the same term extra-contextually, that is, where it is not in current usage.

Political praxis is rich in occurrences of half-muted concepts and truncated terminologies. Very interestingly, Banton mentions the UN Human Rights Commission's Special Rapporteur: 'Some states object to any reference to *indigenous peoples*, in the plural, in the belief that this might be held to confer upon them the right to self-determination' (see also Banton 1996). This is an apt and intriguing parallel with the case of Spain's 'nationalities'. The idea was to avoid at all cost the possibility to question the organic unity of Spain as a nation, even though Spain was

re-configured as a 'nation of nationalities' (Conversi 1997). The firm objection to extending the use of the term 'nation' to other competing 'nationalities' was born out of the fear that it may imply an automatic recognition of their right of self-determination.

To sum up, nationality is a hybrid concept, it is one of a class of terms which convey double meanings. It wants to say something while simultaneously denying it. Nationality's ambiguity and equivocal meaning makes its use particularly inclined to further confusion. The most obvious problem is that there are at least two meanings associated with it, one objective and coterminous with *citizenship*, the other subjective and coterminous with *nation*.

### Conclusions

In response to Banton's think-piece, I have argued that terminological consensus is of the utmost importance, since it can influence both methodological approaches and theoretical outcomes. In virtue of their common roots, it would be fair to assume that *ethnicity* and *nationhood* are twin concepts. I have preferred the term *nationhood* over the term *nationality* as used by Spira (2002), because of the latter's situational ambivalence and equivocal meanings.

To Banton's quintuplets ('race, colour, descent, national and ethnic origin'), I have added the concept of *patria* (fatherland) with its derivatives, while detracting the concept of 'culture'. The latter's open character has been contrasted with the former's rigidity. I have emphasised the serious problems deriving from interchangeability using *culture* and *ethnicity* (especially in US media slang, with terms such as 'culture wars' or 'ethno-cultural' conflicts).

On the other hand, *patriotism* should be entirely conceived as a variety of nationalism—whether the state towards which loyalty is demanded is conceived as a 'civic' *polis* or as an 'ethnic' nation-state. Precisely for that reason, patriotism is potentially more dangerous than other forms of nationalism which control weaker institutions than a centralised state usually does—or, for that matter, may control none. Moreover, since *patria* shares much more with race than with culture, *patriotism* has more in common with *racism* and *xenophobia* (or 'xeno-racism') than with cultural endeavours, continuity and creativity.

Yet culture is often invoked as a binding mechanism and as a distinctive trait of a collectivity, particularly if the latter is based on common descent. As culture is related to tradition, and hence to inter-generational continuity, there is an ingrained perception that it is associated with ethnicity. I believe that the scholar's approach (the *etic* view) should steer away as much as possible from such a confusion.

### Notes

- [1] Of course, to achieve general models one can better understand the 'rules of the game' by becoming a 'player' and participate in it, and hence experience it as an insider while sharing the observed's views. In this case, we can talk about two moments of the same investigation,

rather than two contrasting approaches. The same can be said about the study of nationalism. Whenever an empathic study, including participant observation within a nationalist movement, can yield insights into rules and meanings which may later be used to extrapolate general patterns, the *emic* merges with the *etic*. This is the path incipiently and methodologically chosen, I believe, by Walker Connor with his persistent criticism of academic elitism (Connor 2002; Conversi 2002a; Stone 2002).

- [2] The ensuing etymological sections are mostly taken from the 1998 edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (Pearsall 1998).
- [3] It appears that Galton himself borrowed it from Shakespeare's witticism in *The Tempest* in which Prospero calls the villain Caliban '[a] devil, a born devil, on whose nature, nurture can never stick'.
- [4] See 'Human Genome' (Special Issue), *Science*, 291(5507), 16 February 2001.
- [5] Steven Rose, 'Natural conclusion', *The Guardian*, 19 April 2003.
- [6] Indeed, cultural studies itself has become 'impossible to define' (Sardar and Van Loon 1998: 9).
- [7] Unsurprisingly, there is strong resistance to revert back to its original meaning, once these habits have become so institutionalised within the vested interests of one of the most self-centered and auto-referential of all 'disciplines'.
- [8] One can obviously dispute whether there is such a thing as 'culture'. What we can tangibly identify are only cultural artifacts whose reproduction is depending on inter-generational transmission—although we tend to interpret and classify them according to our notions of the moment.
- [9] In other words, '*nationalism* and *ethnonationalism* both connote identity with and loyalty to the nation. *Patriotism* connotes identity with and loyalty to the state' (Connor 2002: 25).
- [10] Tolstoy's most famous novels contain a strong indictment to patriotism and war. On the negative consequences of Russian patriotism and imperial expansion, see Tolstoy (1969).
- [11] Michael Billig, personal communication.
- [12] For a contemporary reading of de Tocqueville and his legacy in present day US society, see Cohen (2001).
- [13] On the trial, see Matthew Engel, 'Shaven, sluggish Lindh appears in court', *The Guardian*, 25 January 2002; Matthew Engel, 'US Taliban fighter claims ill-treatment', *The Guardian*, 7 February 2002; Oliver Burkeman, 'Lindh was tortured, say lawyers', *The Guardian*, 3 April 2002; Matthew Engel, 'Stunt aims to turn jury against Taliban suspect', *The Guardian*, 14 February 2002.
- [14] On the ethnic character of this myth of chosenness, see Smith (1999, 2003).
- [15] The communitarian philosopher Richard Rorty has openly defended ethnocentrism in pursuit of American patriotic *grandeur*. Rorty's enormous prestige, although largely confined to one coast of the Atlantic, has transformed him into a muse for the xenophobic New Right, in spite of his 'liberal' credentials.
- [16] Although 'nationalities' (*nacionalidades*) were recognised in the plural, none of them was specifically mentioned and, moreover, were to be subordinated to a united and indivisible Spanish 'nation' (*nación*).
- [17] The legal implications and constitutional itinerary of the term 'nationality' are discussed by one of its major proponents (Sole' i Tura 1985).

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