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'We are all equals!' Militarism, homogenization and 'egalitarianism' in nationalist state-building (1789–1945)

Daniele Conversi

Abstract

Cultural homogenization has accompanied many of the most destructive processes of mass displacement during the Twentieth century. Its goal has been to make polity and citizens ethnically and culturally 'congruent'. This article questions the explanatory power of traditional accounts linking cultural homogenization with industrialization during *state-building* processes and the emergence of *nationalism*. It suggests that further attention must be paid to the role of the military as an essential institution in both of these processes. Finally, the 'egalitarian' rhetoric and legitimizing rationale underpinning both militarization and cultural homogenization is assessed as a most powerful nationalist tool for imposing new hierarchical structures.

Keywords: Theories of nationalism; state-building; homogenisation; egalitarianism; historical sociology; militarism.

A social history of cultural homogenization has yet to be written. This is perplexing since its human consequences in modern times have been far-reaching, possibly more so than other social processes. Cultural homogenization is described here as a distinctive form of social engineering exerted by state elites aiming at making the polity and the citizens ethnically and culturally 'congruent'. Typical examples include bans of minority languages and anti-minority legislation in nationalizing states, with an overall emphasis on strict monolingualism and assimilation. Since nationalist thought and practice tend to conflate culture with ethnicity (Fenton 2003, pp. 20–2), there is a high correlation between policies of cultural homogenization and various forms of ethnic discrimination. Genocide and ethnic cleansing can be described as extreme homogenizing attempts and radical varieties of

social engineering. Some authors subsume this practice within the larger process of ‘state-building’ (Rae 2002), a view which this article subscribes to.

Social engineering is a vast umbrella and not necessarily a prerogative of nationalist leadership. Socialist regimes too have engaged in social engineering, through cultural standardization, population displacement and mass murder, perhaps more than any other forms of government – the worst case in terms of mass casualties being Mao’s China. Social engineers’ overriding justification is often to ‘modernize’ the country of which they are in charge. This appeal has often proved to be irresistible both under democratic and totalitarian regimes. However, the trend has proved even more difficult to elude if combined with nationalist calls to ‘modernize’ in a competitive rush with rival nations.

Democracies have often followed the same rationale when dealing with ethnic minorities in specific historical periods. Even the liberal philosopher John Stuart Mill famously stated that ethnic homogeneity was desirable because ‘unassimilated democratic states will tend to dissolve into as many democracies as there are nations within them’ (cited by Connor 2004, p. 35). Therefore, liberals and democrats have both considered a certain degree of cultural and ethnic homogeneity to be politically advantageous. If democracy is no guarantee against intolerance, Michael Mann (2005) has identified genocide as ‘the dark side of democracy’, deriving from a complex interaction between majority rule and ‘cumulative radicalization’. This is now part of a broader current of critical thought on the unintended, tragic consequences of majority rule in democratizing states, which has been defined as ‘demo-skepticism’ (Conversi 2006a; Mann 2006).

The main purpose of this article is to assess the relationship between nationalism and cultural homogenization, whose extreme forms include genocide and ethnic cleansing. However, in order to proceed, I first need to tackle the most influential rival interpretation, the one advanced by the late Ernest Gellner (1925–95). He argued that nationalism and cultural homogenization were the unavoidable outcome of industrialism. I first challenge this view by demonstrating Gellner’s incongruous use of key concepts, particularly concerning the relationship between culture and industrialism. In their place, I use a working definition of cultural homogenization stressing the role played by state elites, first of all the military. Second, I explore the military–educational linkages, their role in fostering cultural homogenization and the peculiar conditions created by war-derived mobilization. Finally, the article addresses the ‘egalitarian’ idiom central to nationalist-inspired forms of militarization and cultural homogenization. The idea of citizens’ equality is key to the legitimacy of nationalist projects. Once assumed that citizens are equal in peace

times, 'equality in sacrifice' is also demanded in war times (Levi 1997, pp. 105–6). But, in practice, citizenship has been defined under strictly exclusivist criteria throughout the era of nationalism and state building, and these were most often ethnically based (Connor 2004; Wimmer 2002, 2006). The article focuses thus on the military as a particularly suitable environment in which to foster cultural homogenization on an often acquiescent public through a rhetorical emphasis on equality and camaraderie. The article establishes thus a triadic linkage between the language of egalitarianism, the practice of cultural homogenization and the experience of militarism.

Cultural homogenization is here defined as a socio-political process aimed at cultural homogeneity and deliberately fostered by political elites. In contrast, homogeneity *per se* is more of an ideological construct than a really existing human fact.¹ It should hence be understood as a top-down attempt to impose socio-cultural change leading to, or aiming at, cultural uniformity. Historically, this practice of cultural engineering has often been transformed into one of radical 'demographic engineering', leading to mass expulsions and genocide (Zarkovic Bookman 1997).

Industry and culture

Most theories of nationalism are modernist, insofar as they situate the appearance of nationalism firmly in modern times. This article is no exception. Yet, a pre-emptive query is *de rigueur*: did anything vaguely similar to homogenizing state-building take place before the modern age? For instance, religious intolerance, Judeophobia and Islamophobia became ethnically tinged in early modern Spain once its targets expanded to include all those converted from Judaism and Islam (*conversos*). In this case, racial laws were applied against the 'new Christians' because of their ethnic descent, thus persecutions continued well after the 1492 expulsion order against all Jews (Rae 2002; Conversi 2007, p. 377).² This remained a relatively exceptional case: even Portugal's expulsions in 1497 took place only ensuing pressures from Princess Isabel of Spain. After the Peace of Augsburg (1555) had established the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, the religious wars (1562–98) had partially the goal of making the state's territory more congruous with the ruler's religious creed (Conversi 2007, p. 378). They constituted earlier attempts at ideological, rather than cultural, homogenization resulting in the expulsion and massacre of religious minorities. Yet, they lacked the obsessive, systematic quality of more recent state-building endeavours, possibly because states were short of the bureaucratic policing apparatus necessary to carry out these directives thoroughly. In short, cultural homogenization is on the whole a typically modern outcome. Given the weaker technological

means, the very idea of national social engineering on a vast human scale was hardly practicable before the twentieth century. Various dramatic definitions apply to the period spanning from secular Turkey's annihilation campaigns (Rae 2002, pp. 124–62; Mann 2005, pp. 111–78) to Yugoslavia's *fin de siècle* ethnic cleansing (Rae 2002, pp. 165–210; Ramet 2006, pp. 1–40): the 'Age of Extremes' or the 'short twentieth century' (Hobsbawm 1994), the 'century of total war' (Tilly 1985, 1990; Shaw 1988), the 'century of genocide' (Levene 2000; Carmichael 2005). In central, eastern and parts of southern Europe, the peak of homogenization policies was reached between the two world wars, when cultural difference and variation were seen as threats to 'national security' and governmental stability. This included the period when fascism and communism exerted the maximum grip on popular imagination.

'States make war, wars make states': once attributed to either *realpolitik*, or anarchist thought this line of argument has now acquired a broad scholarly respectability. The study of the relationship between state-building and war-making was pioneered by Charles Tilly (1985, 1990), with a number of partial variants in sociology (Shaw 1988; Mann 1993), military history (Bond 1998), fascism studies (Gentile 2003), and genocide studies (Levene 2005). This article adopts a variant of the 'wars-make-nations' approach privileging cultural engineering and homogenization as factors spearheading state centralization. In nationalist practice, cultural entrepreneurs aim to unify, standardize and 'modernize' popular culture so that the boundaries of the governed unit can be defined by, and their constituencies identify with, the ruling elite. Such a top-down process entailed assimilation and the forced erosion of cultural differences.

As this line of reasoning may not be universally accepted, at least one significant alternative explanation should be considered here. The main possible challenge to the argument that militarization acted as the incubator of later and broader processes of cultural homogenization has been advanced by Ernest Gellner. Gellner's (2006) work incorporates the only fully fledged and influential theory addressing the relationship between nationalism and cultural homogenization. He famously described the latter as the inevitable product of industrialism. The destruction of the social relationships, values and cultures of agricultural society spawned nationalism as an alternative form of social cohesion. With the passage to industrial society, a standardized 'high' culture became an all-pervasive requisite. However, only the state had the power to inculcate the new standard on an uprooted labour force. In the homogenizing world of nation-states, human societies found themselves at a radical crossroads: they could either organize themselves on the basis of the nation-state model or succumb. A nation is hence defined as common membership in a shared High

Culture. In turn, nationalism is defined as ‘primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent’ (Gellner 2006, p. 1). This can be identified as Gellner’s *homogenization principle*.

Moreover, mass mobility and the uprooting of peasants from the countryside produced a new cultural freak. Gellner identified this as the perfectly replaceable ‘modular man’, a human item ‘capable of performing highly diverse tasks in the same general cultural idiom’ (Gellner 1994, p. 102). Later on, when dealing with the rise of militarism, we shall return to the industrial–military consequences of the ‘modular man’. Only three comments should be made here: first, we should note that Gellner used terms like (high) culture, (standardized) language and ethnicity in a very flexible way, sometimes interchangeably. Yet, despite such a conceptual muddle, these notions constitute the pillars of Gellner’s vision of nationalism. Language was central to his definition of culture as he unwittingly embraced Herder’s language-centered vision.³ Second, we can observe a major omission: a partial, curtailed, unfinished appreciation of the state’s role in the ‘nationalization of the masses’ (Mosse 1975). Although Gellner clearly confirmed the state’s central responsibility in setting the basis for a mass education system, he failed to relate it to other forms of state-building policies, some of which implied overt or covert cultural standardization. In the main, the role played by internal repression, external aggression and ‘national security’ is virtually absent. Finally, and most importantly, the function of wars and state-led militarization in homogenizing practices is ignored. Gellner identified the modern state as the only institution capable of assisting the process of industrialization through the nationalist imposition of compulsory education. But in other areas Gellner’s explanation omits the role of political agency, which this article seeks to reincorporate.

The argument advanced here is rather that national homogenization was pursued by rulers and bureaucrats who often subscribed to an agenda that had scarcely to do with modern human emancipation.

Educating soldiers, disciplining pupils

Military historians, social historians, and historical sociologists have described in a variety of ways the role of the army and conscription in the ‘nationalization of the masses’.⁴ The more limited scope here is to analyse this in the light of the emergence of nationalism, particularly of the previously explored Gellnerian view of nationalism as a product of industrialization’s homogeneity needs.

Wars have been fought throughout human history, and their nature has incessantly changed. At the same time, military developments have often anticipated broader social trends. The awareness of such linkages

has been one of the central tenets of the ‘war and society’ historical school emerged in the late 1960s (see Bond 1998 and Hale 1998). Most of these scholars agree that in a pre-nationalist era war had a quite different meaning:

Without the sort of nationalism that seeks and provides momentum for wars, and in the absence of an effective system of conscription, we cannot speak in this [pre-nationalist] period of a militarized society. . . . One can nonetheless speak of a society adequately organized to produce wars on demand, in spite . . . of a sluggish resistance to paying for or serving in them. (Hale 1998, p. 44)

Epochal changes only began to occur with the onset of national patriotism. Although the precise date is difficult to ascertain, its geographical whereabouts can be more easily located: French elites are nearly universally designated as the standard bearers of ‘nation-building’. Since the political origins of nationalism are most often situated in the French revolution (Hobsbawm 1990, 1994; Connor 2004), the inspiring source of the homogenization–militarism linkage can also be found here (Conversi 2007). Epochal like the Revolution, international wars and colonial expansion were all related to conflict and war, hence to increasing levels of popular participation in the alleged defense or empowerment of the Fatherland.

It is essential to note that the Jacobins did not invent either centralism or militarism, they simply inherited them from the pre-existing cultural milieu and state structures: French absolutism was the main precursor of homogenizing state-building. As far back as 1539, the *Ordonnance* (edict) of Villers-Cotterêts led to the compulsory use of French in all written legislation (Calvert 1998, pp. 182–3, Hagege 1996: 83–4). Although the goal was to discourage the use of Latin in official documents, its more illustrious casualty became Occitan, the ancient *langue d’oc*. Such a lesser form of cultural homogenization was nevertheless already indicative of an incipient trend towards the concentration of powers into the hands of the ruling elite. Interestingly, the first expulsion of Roma (gypsies) from Paris occurred in the same year of the Edict, as Frances I (1494–1547, r. 1515–47) prohibited Roma from residing in France (Fraser 1995, p. 96), although occasional expulsion orders in France date back to 1427 (Hancock 1987, p. 55). This was also the year when England’s Henry VIII (1491–1547, r. 1509–47) began the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1538–41) by confiscating Catholic property (Smith 2006, p. 440). Religious and ideological persecution, rather than ethnic or linguistic discrimination, became the primary concerns of European ruling classes – although the legislation against nomads, vagrants and some categories of migrants precluded more ethnically based forms of persecution. But,

overall, religion and ideology were upheld by nascent absolutist regimes. The famous Edict of Nantes (1598), promulgated by Henri IV (1553–1610, r. 1589–1610), had granted the Huguenots protection and recognition, instituting a sort of state secularism after the traumatic Wars of Religion (1562–98). Yet, less than a century later, the Edict of Fontainebleau (1685) by Louis XIV of France (1638–1715, r. 1643–1715) decreed the demolition of Huguenot parsonages, churches and schools.

'*Le Roi Soleil*'s path was largely conceived and arranged by his chief minister Cardinal Mazarin (1602–61), on the footsteps of Cardinal Richelieu (1585–1642), chief minister of King Louis XIII, '*le Juste*' (1601–43, r. 1610–43). Both ministers were fervent unificationists and attempted to establish the most highly centralized polity in Europe, succeeding where Spain's Count-Duke of Olivares had failed (Elliott 1984). Both before and after the Thirty Years' War (1618–48), the backdrop for these early centralizing attempts was inter-state competition, war, conflict and incursions into neighbouring states (including the French army's expedition into northern Italy under Richelieu's command). Some authors explain Richelieu's accomplishment already in terms of national patriotic appeal:

While much of the Cardinal's success at centralizing power was due to fortune and his own qualities, he was making use of ideas of *patrie* that had acquired new meaning(s) and motivational force in the sixteenth century, mirrored in Bodin's *république*, wherein the King embodied France's culture and her people's attainment of moral virtue. (Greenfeld 1992, p. 91)

Whether we can speak of patriotism or nationalism during the early modern or pre-modern age is an issue which has been at the centre of long lasting debates (see Smith 1998, 2004). What we should again stress here is the irregular, spasmodic nature of homogenizing attempts, which did not follow a common pattern or template.⁵ The template was provided by nationalism as the new form of governance which expanded since the French Revolution, particularly after the *levée en masse* decreed on 23 August 1793 (Conversi 2007). Ensuing *la Révolution*, a steam-rolling, all-binding vision of nationhood came to prevail through simultaneous 'nation-building' and 'nation-killing' (Van Der Berghe 1992). The age of revolution (1789–1848) was immediately unleashed, its consequences lasting till our own days: 'Since 1789, the dogma that "alien rule is illegitimate rule" has been infecting ethnically aware peoples in an ever-broadening pattern' (Connor 1994, p. 169).⁶

Revolutionary ideas on civilian–military relations were also shaped by French political philosophy: when in 1793 the Revolutionaries

uttered ‘Every citizen should be a soldier, and every soldier a citizen’ (cited in Birnbaum 1988, p. 60), they were largely reiterating the words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78). Rousseauian principles had already informed the National Convention’s proclamation of the ‘sovereignty of the people’ in 1792. Yet, the toughest test to the sovereignty principle was submitted only when foreign armies attempted to invade the country.

Prior to the *levée*, egalitarian-nationalist propaganda had already transformed initial battle reversals into astounding victories.⁷ The defeat of the largely unprepared Prussian army at Valmy (20 September 1792) had proven that patriotic fervour and numerical superiority were keys to military victory (Hublot 1987). The unprecedented popular mobilization ensuing the *levée* provided the first historical instance of incipient ‘nationalization of the masses’ from which generations of state-builders across the world would learn, although revolutionary elites were not necessarily aware of its implications. Prussian generals promptly learned the lesson, so that a few decades later the military theorist Carl Philipp Gottfried von Clausewitz (1780–1831) proclaimed: ‘the first rule therefore should be: put the largest possible army into the field’ (Clausewitz 1976 [1820], p. 194). From this moment on, the Prussian state engaged in massive military recruitment, army build-up, nation-building and gradual centralization by unleashing ethnic patriotism. The soldier came to embody national identity more than the poet. By 1913 the incessantly expanding German state was allocating over 90 per cent of its national income to defence through heavy taxation (Berghahn 1993, pp. 70–76, 116–135).

After France’s clamorous victories, mass conscription was instituted in a host of Western and Westernising countries, reaching as far as Japan. Here, the Meiji rulers transformed the *samurai* class system into the new Imperial army (1870–81, see Harries and Harries 1994).⁸ Governments commonly saw conscription and militarization ‘as an instrument for developing social cohesion and political docility of the masses’ (Bond 1998, p. 32). Napoleon’s final defeat at Waterloo (1815) seemed to have brought a new era of stability. But the era of illusory harmony straddling from the *Pax Britannica* to the Great War was also the age of imperial expansion and nationalism triumphant. In fact, war and destruction were just being exported beyond European borders. Linda Colley noted:

the profit and the price of this hundred-year partial European peace was unprecedented Western, and especially British, freedom to concentrate on global empire. In 1800, the European powers, together with Russia and the United States, laid claim to some 35

percent of the globe's total land area. By 1914 ... [their] proportion of the globe had risen to 84 percent. (Colley 2002, p. 311)⁹

As racism accompanied empire-building, in the same vein nationalism accompanied state-making, as the two sides of each coin.¹⁰ The entire armour of human and technological advantages acquired during this period of unprecedented accumulation, military growth, free-market expansion and inter-state competition was finally unleashed in World War I.

Throughout this period, the target and goal of state-builders remained constantly the moulding and shaping of ordinary citizens. After the World War I cataclysm, the short-lived interwar hiatus was soon thwarted by the rise of fascism with its futurist ideology, totalitarian symbolism and a programme of radically remaking society (Gentile 2003). Idealizing war as a regenerative 'rite of passage', Fascism itself was strictly linked with the war-machine through increasingly stringent alliances with the bellic industry and high military cadres.¹¹ The Nazis' establishment of compulsory draft (in March 1935) was a further far-reaching step in this direction. The triadic relationship between mass industrialization, militarization and extreme nationalism became most palpable under the Third Reich.¹²

In such an extreme homogenizing context, the pressure for complete cultural uniformity led to an urge to realize 'unanimist fantasies' of ethno-racial purification (Gilroy 2000). In Charles Tilly's words, the modern nation-state's lust for homogeneity and control thus spawned 'the most bellicose century in human history' (Tilly 1990, p. 67). Tilly quotes various statistics for the whole century extrapolating about 275 wars and 115 million deaths in battle and at least as many civilian deaths. This data is 'optimistic' if one considers that it still excludes hundreds of millions killed by the state, through policies of genocide, politicide, 'classicide', population transfer, economic manipulation and massive starvation (Mann 2005).

Dying for the 'fatherland' is certainly not a modern fixation. Horace's epigram *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* ('It is sweet and good to die for one's country') demanded just that. Nationalists may assert that a collectivity which the Latins called *patria* can be traced back to hunter-gatherer societies, when sacrifice and self-abnegation were indeed essential to group survival, at least in war times. But most modernist scholars would agree that a wider project of mass self-abnegation and sacrifice could only be conceived by political elites in a post-1789 scenario (see Hobsbawm 1990). Not by chance, the poet Wilfred Owen (1893–1918) famously used Horace's line to describe the horrors of trench and gas warfare during World War I as 'these who die as cattle' (in Stallworthy 2002, p. 107).¹³

Military practice provided the cast and guide for inculcating homogenizing habits among ever-larger segments of the citizenry. Elsewhere, Tilly (1985) famously describes the modern state as a racket organization built on the taxation of uprooted, terrorized citizens and their military ‘protection’. It is commonly acknowledged that:

the military played a prime role, influencing both the state apparatus and other organizations including, at a later date, business firms. For it was to a large extent in the military sphere that administrative power in the modern guise was pioneered. (Giddens 1985, p. 113)

In the history of sciences, Lewis Mumford (1963) focused on the mutual relationship between militarization and the mechanizing of social relations, including economic exploitation. Mumford’s concept of *megamachine*, a machine whose components are human beings, indicates a ‘social engine’ politically utilized to coordinate humans when leaders began to apply scientific discoveries to boost the size, strength and accuracy of the labour crews. The army and the bureaucracy were particularly functional ‘megamachines’. However, the relationship between war and cultural homogenization is left untouched by most authors. For instance, Giddens’ (1985, pp. 4–11, 194–208) reading of industrialism and the ‘dialectic of control’ is particularly problematic, insofar as there is no mention of their interrelationship with mass education. His core concern remains the state, not the partnership between the rise of mass armies and the homogenization of culture.¹⁴

Homogenization was largely youth-directed. The project aimed to be the long-term moulding of national consciousness in theory and practice, that is, through educational indoctrination and military mobilization. Most often, the elderly were largely spared from homogenizing practices, except under radical regimes pursuing eliminationist strategies. Nationalist schooling was undeniably forward-looking as mass education had broader and more all-pervasive aims than mass conscription. Moreover, it could be received more positively by the bulk of the population, except when children were ‘abducted’ by force from their families to enter compulsory learning.

The intimate connection between military service and educational standardization can be better explored in nineteenth-century French educational policies. While some hailed Napoleon as the ‘education Emperor’ (Markham 2003, p. 121), the standardization of curriculum, school uniform, examination procedures, bureaucratic structure and disciplinary standards drove pupils away from state-controlled schools. Catholic education thus lived through an unforeseen revival (Sutherland 1985, pp. 368–9). With the institution of the *lycées* system, Napoleon aspired at the shaping of a national elite by evenly applying

military-like discipline and the principle of equal opportunities, assisted by the introduction of scholarships.¹⁵ The system sought to imbue young pupils with patriotic-militarist virtues and shape them into loyal servants of the central state (Moody 2006).¹⁶ Moreover, primary schools enrolment further declined from 1847 to 1850, losing 208,000 students (6 per cent) from 3,530,000 to 3,322,000 (Mayeur 2004, p. 480). In global terms, Napoleon's vision of a 'nation-in-arms' had probably the deepest international impact. It was emulated in places as far away as Turkey, where the 'military-nation' became the education-based 'foundational myth of Turkish nationalism' (Altınay 2006) and Japan, where school teachers were trained in barracks, while primary and secondary schools acted as indoctrinating institutions to coach students for the imperial army (Harries and Harries 1994). Authoritarian regimes were particularly skilled at building 'conscription societies' through 'administered mass organizations' (Kasza 1995), whose consensual pillars rested on compulsory education.

At the commencement of the French Third Republic (1871), the minister of education Jules Ferry (1832–93) introduced even more sweeping and far-reaching reforms. These led to the rapid acculturation and indoctrination of most of the peasantry, who not only learned French, but also began to assume a French identity (see Weber 1979). This emphasis on mass education can be related to Gellner's (2006, pp. 26–37) idea that uniform schooling creates a mobile labour force, hence spawning nationalism. With Ferry's reforms, the education–military linkage became all the more emphasized, mimicking developments in rival Prussia. In terms of acculturation, by 1896 the army had proved to be 'an agency as potent in its way as the schools' (Weber 1979, p. 302). The elementary schools and the army actively collaborated 'to teach nationalism to the masses' (Posen 1993, p. 111). The entire process of militarization through the school is described with richness of detail by Eugene Weber: as a pedagogical exercise, and as a sort of catechism imposed upon the whole of France, calling for the child's

duty to defend the fatherland, to shed his blood or die for the commonweal, ... to obey the government, to perform military service, to work, learn, pay taxes and so on. At the very start of school, children were taught that their first duty was to defend their country as soldiers. ... Commencement speeches recalled this sacred duty in ritual terms – our boys will defend the soil of the fatherland. The whole school programme turned on expanding the theme. (Weber 1976, p. 333)

All disciplines were harnessed to this military goal: history, literature, geography and civic education. Gymnastics was expanded into a

martial discipline to shape students' bodies and turn them into future soldiers of the *Patrie*. Both Ferry's France and Bismarck's Prussia were 'built on two pillars of vertical integration: compulsory education and compulsory military service, which together constituted an alliance of "light and power" or "the mark of true civilization"' (Ferry 2005, p. 228). One decade after France's defeat by Prussia (1871), "one could neatly perceive the notion of a Spartan-style education, entirely devoted to patriotic exaltation and where *the school becomes the antechamber of the barrack*" (Girardet 1953, p. 169, emphasis added).¹⁷ Propaganda through schooling and mass media became essential in the dissemination of militarism. Patriotism was a major tool in this promulgation drive:

In the 1870s nearly every French family became acquainted with the nature of army life. The darker aspects of barrack life were pushed into the background; what mattered above all was to prepare for the imminent war of revenge against Germany. Officers marked in black the frontiers of the lost provinces on maps of France, and soldiers ending their service often presented a bust of "Alsace in tears" to their company commander. (Bond 1998, p. 35)¹⁸

If the army became so popular, one can deduce that it provided a deeper and faster emotional impact on the general population than compulsory education. School took much longer to shape loyal citizens, despite the fact that most French peasants had incorporated a humiliating sense of class inferiority and often desired to remove the stigma associated with rural mores and illiteracy (Weber 1979). Beside patriotism and national defence, other motives for militarization lurked: economic incentives for those who joined the army may have been at least equally significant at a time when rural life was disintegrating, the old social order was crumbling, state centralization pressed on, and massive taxation exacted a heavy toll on ordinary citizens precisely for enhancing 'national security'. Victorious armies are obviously accorded a prestige and decision power that defeated armies can rarely achieve. However, in both cases war remains an uprooting experience. Therefore, the potential risks for internal fragmentation belongs to the calculations of every good strategists:

Almost any state that makes war finds that it cannot pay for the effort from its accumulated reserves and current revenues. Almost all war-making states borrow extensively, raise taxes, and seize the means of combat – including men – from reluctant citizens who have other uses for their resources. Pre-revolutionary France followed these rules faithfully, to the point of accumulating debts that eventually forced the calling of the Estates General. Nor did the

Revolution repeal the rules: once France declared war on Austria in 1792, the state's demands for revenues and manpower excited resistance just as fierce as that which had broken under the Old Regime. In overcoming the resistance, revolutionaries built yet another set of centralized controls. (Tilly 1990, p. 110)

The means for overcoming all these successive crises was provided by national patriotism and deepening state centralization. Despite widespread hatred for various forms of state repression (Cobb 1970), the idea that the *Patrie* was being victimized and its soil violated awakened powerful patriotic feelings. Since the start, this form of patriotism was associated with international aggression (Forrest 2003). The average citizen began to identify with the soldier as the supreme expression of the collective will, condensing the finest of national virtues: war itself became a homogenizing experience as soldiers and sailors represented the entire nation and the civilian population endured common privations and responsibilities (Tilly 1990, p. 116). By continuously mobilizing people either for war or preparation for war, Parisian elites could achieve support and unity in what had become one of the most fragmented, ideologically divided, identity-ridden countries in Europe. Before the *levée*, the raising of volunteers was often surrounded by a festival atmosphere punctuated by martial music (Lynn 1996, p. 121). Given France and Prussia's central place in the power map of Europe, the homogenization principle spread rapidly.

With the propagation of nationalism, the state's drive to cultural homogeneity through the military-education apparatus unfolded throughout Europe. For instance, in the Balkans the Greek nation had to be violently forged out of a plethora of ethnically distinct and highly inter-mixed communities, which preserved only tenuous recollection of a shared past. Patriotic elites imposed official Greekness by systematic homogenization through the simultaneous use of the national army, compulsory schooling and even 'national' universities (Kitromilides 1989). This occurred much before any form of industrialization could even be conceived (Smith 1998, p. 36ff). The ruthless eradication of non-Greek memories and cultures is a process which has continued in the postwar (Mazower, 2004) and at least till the 1990s (Karakasidou 1997). In Italy, the process was only superficially gentler, until the advent of World War I and fascism. If we compare the humanitarian description of primary school children in Edmondo De Amicis' (1846-1908) *Cuore* (Heart) with fascism's emphasis on youth, physical prowess and brutal force, we can clearly witness the advent of a full-blown 'nationalization of the masses', simultaneously conducted through the homogenizing agencies of mass education and the military (Mosse 1975; Gentile 2003). In Belgrade, all traces of the Ottoman

past began to be systematically erased after Serbian nationalists seized full power in 1878 (Sells 1996). Tragedy repeated itself yet again during the 1990s in those Bosnian areas ethnically ‘cleansed’ by pro-Belgrade militias (Ramet 2006). In Turkey, the sanitization of ‘national’ culture from supposedly ‘foreign’ elements often included varieties of Turkish popular culture, entailing a drive at radical homogenization which accompanied demographic displacement, mass population transfers and genocide among the minorities (Mann 2005, p. 111–178). De-Turkification could thus easily take place in the name of Turkishness as embodied in the ‘national’ army, the new legal codes and the Westernizing school curricula being imposed on a still largely ‘non-nationalised’ population. In fact, the militarization of education conflating national identity with militarism lied at the core of post-Ottoman secular identity formation. As recently observed, in Turkey the school served to prepare for the army, while the army became the school of the nation (Altınay 2006). The Napoleonic concept of a ‘nation in arm’ was translated by the Turkish autocrats into that of Turkey as a ‘military nation’.

Michel Foucault’s (1979, 1994) philosophy offers a standpoint from which to observe the wider homogenizing implications of the military–educational linkage. For him, mass conscription and compulsory education became constitutive parts of the same modern system. Along with hospitals and prisons, they formed those ‘disciplinary institutions’ (*institutions disciplinaires*), which, taken together, became the four pillars of the disciplinary state, all parts of an integrated system of control and production. These direct forms of ‘governmentality’ led to an abject state of ‘subjectification’ via the incorporation of shared set of values by the individual, particularly during the secondary education process (Jardine 2005). In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault indeed adumbrates the correlation between schooling and militarism: both are incorporated into an analysis concerning the homogenizing pedagogy of the army–state complex via simultaneous mass education and militarization. Foucault describes the ways military education disciplined the individual body through loud, snapping drill commands and other orders inducing automatism. The goal was to reshape the wider social order through equalized individuals and regimented bodies marching together like automatons. Foucault’s description can easily be corroborated by historical evidence: for instance, Prussian armies were remarkably gifted in performing the drill (*Exerzieren*), the memorization of specific movements and actions through hammering repetition. In Foucauldian terms, these actions became so instinctive to the soldiers as to reshape their bodies according to the commands of the disciplinary state. The soldiers thought and acted as a collectivity, so that their behaviour became routinely predictable and homogenized. In fact, their increas-

ingly inter-class origin revealed that they were not ‘born equal’ to one another, neither were they homogeneously similar: they were *taught* to be so through harsh discipline. Education, not mere training, was hence the key to military life and its main goal was to instill obedience and uniformity, which in turn would grant efficacy, reliability and success against foes and enemies. A new man with his new body was being created and he had to perform according to a new choreography.

We have mentioned before the rise of the ‘modular man’ as the end product of industrialization (Gellner 1994, p. 100–4). His capacity of carrying out a variety of assignments and duties by obeying the same set of rules and sharing a common idiom makes him ready to become part of the emerging ‘conscript armies’ of industrialism. This form of ‘conscription’ is more than metaphorical, as men are constrained into the new ‘world order’ without the possibility of opposing it. Yet coercion needs a minimum of consensus to successfully meet its goals. Such a consensus is provided by the most powerful ideological invention of modernity, nationalism. Nationalism does not only accompany modernity and uprooting, it also provides its utmost rationale, its preeminent legitimizing principle. The ‘modular man’ could thus be perfectly replaceable: soldier after soldier could fall on the battlefield, while the supreme command could be scientifically certain that another, exactly ‘identical’, individual could take his place.

Standards of clothing, timekeeping, ‘good’ social behaviour and work ethic were mandatory in state schools, transgression leading to punishment. Corporal punishment remained in education long after John Locke openly condemned it in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (Locke 1947, p. 203–390). School discipline echoed, and prepared for, harsher disciplinary measures within the military. The triumph of state nationalism accelerated the process exponentially. Engaging in the grandiose project of nation-building and social engineering, official nationalism acquired the capacity to produce that very ‘self-disciplined subjectivity’ necessary for the state to exert control both within and outside official institutions. This made possible broader forms of organizational discipline, and finally the participation of the masses into industrialized warfare (Shaw 1988). In a kind of domino effect, the fierce rivalry and mutual emulation between France and Prussia heralded a new era of European-wide intense competition.

But was the Franco-Prussian model universally applicable all the way through Europe? Despite a common drift towards the coming catastrophe, we must allow for some degree of national variations, even exceptions. For instance, the British Royal Navy played a more crucial role than the army, mostly because of Britain’s imperial expansion (Kiernan 1998). Linda Colley recognizes Britain’s *sui generis* position: although by 1750 its military reach was already

spanning the globe, in 1850 the total number of all armed personnel, apart from the mostly non-British manned East India Company, amounted to just over 105,000 men. This was less than a third of the size of France's military at that time, less than an eighth of Russia's, and smaller even than the army of Prussia which possessed no colonies at all (Colley 2002, p. 312). In other words, until quite late the British Empire did not follow the continental drift towards army aggrandizement and mass conscription.¹⁹ But, when Britain entered World War I, it could rapidly mobilize mass support through media-whipped jingoism.

Another difference lay in the *regimental* character of some modern armies. This usually inculcates local attachments and parallel loyalties: members of the regiment are encouraged to think of themselves as a family, rather than as a tactical unit. Each regiment has its own identity, traditions, history and lineage, often dating back centuries. For instance, the Scottish regimental system with its distinctive uniforms, cap badges, tartans, kilts and highland dress related to clans, clan societies and families has proved highly effective. Such a rich variety of identity symbols has generated attachments to both Scottish identity and empire. Scotland's most famous corps, the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) has served the Crown and empire since 1739, until it was disbanded in March 2006 as part of New Labour's Americanization drift. The US Army regimental system performed a similar role till it was replaced by a brigade system during the reorganization of the late 1950s. Battalions could be more easily mobilized in times of war if they maintained this sense of local cohesion, while the possibility of mutinies was kept at bay with various strategic expedients. These included an overarching emphasis on patriotism, as in Germany, where regiments also preserved allegiance to place and regional identity.

I have just described the role of war and the modern military machine in homogenizing forms of nation-building. This replaces Gellner's focus on industrialism as spearheading cultural-linguistic homogenization. Of course, we should not turn this into the only alternative explanation. For instance, there can be forms of homogenizing nationalism in non-militarist, de-centralized, fairly peaceful societies. Moreover, anti-state guerrilla movements are often more successful in forging cohesive identities and reinforcing ethnonational boundaries, since their survival is continuously at stake and depends more heavily on voluntary recruitment without a central administration (Conversi 1997). But these do not rule out the state's capacity and intent of cultural homogenization through 'legitimate violence'. In short, at least some of the relationships for which Gellner argues are better re-located from the economic to the military sphere.

At least one further aspect was shared by both industrialization and militarization, especially if supplemented by nationalism: the mirage of egalitarian relationships. In both cases, nationalism shaped and justified new forms of social relationship and political cohesion first within the barracks, then within society as a whole as this was being radically reshaped by industrialization. European states led the way by building up fearsome coercive means of their own as they deprived civilian populations of access to those means, relying mostly on capital and capitalists to reorganize coercion (Tilly 1990, pp. 68–9). Yet, their impact was so far-reaching that a whole global order emerged in its image.

So far, I have focused on the most ‘egalitarian’, yet hierarchical, of all modern institutions, the mass army. For, it is clear that, while the rigidity of the chain of command remains unassailable, an army can only work on the basis of equal duties, rights and behaviour of its low-level ranks. Due to practical reasons, emerging modern armies experienced first and most forcefully demands for cultural standardization and recruits’ egalitarianism. This was reinforced by an emphasis on controlling dissent through unprecedented methods of conformism.

The next section will emphasize the new egalitarian ethos underpinning the building of modern armies, compulsory education and entire societies. Far from being an inevitable outcome of industrial society, the egalitarian stress transcended industrialism and provided the justification for incessant state expansion.

Egalitarian rhetoric, homogenizing practice

Joseph Roth (1894–1939)’s novel *Das falsche Gewicht* (‘Weights and Measures’, 1937) describes a metric inspector sent by the Habsburg administration into the faraway Galician borderland (present-day Ukraine) spanning the Austro-Hungarian and Tsarist Empires. Anselm Eibenschütz was the quintessential bureaucrat faithfully devoted to a rigorous enforcement of state rules on proper weights and measures. A former low-level official in the imperial army, his strictly egalitarian ethos turned him into a fastidious law enforcer. Eibenschütz’s mandate was to ensure ‘fairness’ and ‘transparency’, rectitude and justice, yet his victims felt targeted by an incomprehensible sense of unfairness and injustice. Such a naive law-abiding egalitarianism rendered him the most hated man in town, abhorred by the very locals upon whom his egalitarian vision was unleashed. To them he personified a despicable form of impersonal standardization, state control and cultural interference. Most importantly, the scenario was set during the years immediately preceding World War I, when nationalism was still the preserve of a few literati and lay people could not identify with centrally-inspired directives in the name of a

common sense of national belonging. When nationalism triumphed and the old imperial order was broken apart by internal dissent and international conspiracies, a new emphasis on ‘egalitarian’ relationships was set to permeate society in its entirety. Under nationalist rule, it was much harder to escape the pressures to abide by certain directives and obey state orders, since they were uttered in the language of ethno-national kin-relatedness and brotherhood. Anarchists, socialists, traditionalists and a few other ‘counter-entropic’ elements tried to resist, but their success was limited and temporary. It was becoming increasingly easier to target dissent as national ‘betrayal’. All this represented an epochal shift in the patterns of governance, insofar as legitimacy was conferred upon the ruler in the name of the nation. No other forms of political legitimacy could bestow an equal amount of power on incumbent leaders (Connor 2004).

However, a second and even more unrestrained force was simultaneously at work in the bubbling hotspots of decaying empires and early nationalizing states: *industrialization*. The advent of industrial society led to an entirely new set of social relations, making the previous cultural division of labour a practical impossibility. Again, we should turn to Gellner for a particularly influential view about the relationship between egalitarianism and industrialization, via nationalism. For Gellner, industrial societies are more ‘egalitarian’ because they are ‘mobile’. By ‘mobility’ we should understand the rapid circulation of cheap labour inevitably leading to uprootedness. *Déracinement* was then the bedfellow of industrialization and social dislocation its chaperon. In the new shape of things, formal or conspicuous inequalities could no longer be ‘officially’ tolerated, at least not in the political arena. Moreover, the pressure to overcome differences in status became associated with a series of cultural markers, such as language, public and private behaviours, race, colour, and customs. As further collateral damage, ethnic otherness and cultural difference became invested with unprecedented negative meaning. Whereas agricultural society was entirely predicated on a vertical division between a minuscule upper class and a majority of mostly rural labourers, with the advent of industrialism labour mobility becomes the dominant principle and all social change is steered towards that direction. Accordingly, nationalism becomes a prime mover towards inter-class coalitions and emotional convergence: its egalitarian rhetoric of brotherhood reveals just this trend.

The pervasive logic of Gellner’s argument can be synthesized in the following equation: *modernity = industrialism = mass dislocation = homogenization = nationalism*. The founding ethos of this set of causal equivalences is egalitarianism. ‘Modern society has an inherent

tendency towards a fair measure of equality in style of life' (Gellner 1981, p. 762).

But how far is egalitarianism central to the legitimacy of the modern state? Although Gellner does not always confuse cultural homogenization with equality, he seems to argue that the former reduces cultural differences as bases of discrimination (if not inequality). In other words, cultural homogenization reduces the number of those linguistic and stylistic differences which could serve as bases of inequality in the job market. But it does not eliminate inequalities or discrimination. The class chasm opening up as a consequence of industrialization in its early phase may be no longer tolerable in a second phase, but it characterizes the industrial revolution as a whole. It was this chasm which inspired Marx and Engels' vision of a 'truly' egalitarian classless society. The horrific vision of London's *Lumpenproletariat* lying in a state of abysmal destitution was probably one of the most enduring emotional impacts in Marx's own perception of the effects of industrial society. The pauperization of former peasants into a mass urban proletariat, Gellner's 'modular men', was to provide the catalyst for many a revolutionary. The spread of Marxist and socialist doctrines is therefore often seen as a societal reaction to the overriding, inhumane inequalities characterizing early industrialization.

To recapitulate, in Gellner's analysis, equality, the *structural* dimension, is associated with homogeneity, the *cultural* dimension. Gellner does not necessarily conflate homogenization with equality. Yet, two different measures and levels are brought into one. The second one, culture, presents a series of problems of its own, including its use as synonymous with language and its overlapping usage with ethnicity. The weakness in Gellner's *equality-homogeneity* argument can be confirmed by bringing in one classical case: the meritocratic, egalitarian myth pervading American society vis-à-vis other societies. The myth stresses the immigrants' need to homogenize into a 'superior' host culture through banal, repetitive civic rituals and various forms of daily emotional involvement (Billig 1995). The myth of an egalitarian society is proffered as the unquestionable path down which newcomers must travel to achieve perfect social harmony. But this myth of individual mobility serves rather the purpose of underpinning a system which de facto reinforces class inequalities and the gap between the have and the have-nots. Similarly, behind the myth of a unique American individualism lies a more radical, all-pervasive collectivist ethos of social control (Shain 1994, pp. 3–18, 48–55).

In principle, compulsory education was legitimated as a strategy to 'equalize opportunities' for those who acquire it. According to this logic, a corresponding inequality would arise between those who have access to public education and those who don't. This is Gellner's view: a 'barrier to mobility and equality will, having inhibited easy identifica-

tion, engender a new frontier' (Gellner 2006, p. 75). Leaving aside the tautological idea that a 'barrier' may generate a 'frontier' for Gellner, social mobility is a step forward towards equality: cultural homogenization reduces those linguistic and stylistic differences which could act as bases of inequality in the job market. In principle, education equalizes opportunities for those who acquire it, while fostering sharp inequalities between those who do and don't acquire it. Yet, linguistic and stylistic differences can still act as bases of inequality in the job market.

This leads us to another contentious idea: for Gellner, a standardized 'High Culture', by which he mostly meant an official language diffused through mass education, is the vector and carrier for a more 'egalitarian' society:

In industrial and industrializing societies, with unstable occupational structures and semantic rather than physical work, a standardized, shared, education-linked culture becomes enormously important, and can only be maintained by a formal educational system which in turn needs political protection. This engenders that marriage of state and culture, whose exclusive legitimacy is the central moral intuition of nationalism. (Gellner 2006, p. 3)

Historically, most nationalists preached equality while practising discrimination against various strata, particularly against 'out-groups' (Wimmer 2002, 2005, 2006). Discrimination was replicated in the domestic arena within various subgroups and classes belonging to the dominant *ethnie* or nationality. The rhetoric of egalitarianism prompted the citizens to demonstrate an 'equal' degree of abnegation towards the leader's directives. In the extreme case of fascism, egalitarian appeals were framed within a rigid hierarchical structure, its elitist individualism being upheld by a new aristocracy of honour, loyalty and violence (Gentile 2003). In both its liberal and authoritarian variants, nationalism preached egalitarian inter-classism, while more prosaically seeking cultural and behavioural uniformity. The deceptive connection between egalitarianism and homogenization is thus put by Andreas Wimmer:

In the eyes of nationalists, the nationalist community is of an egalitarian nature, because it is derived from the idea of cultural homogeneity: it is made up of all those that share the same culture, independently from their economic situation, their social position or their political standing. (Wimmer 2002, p. 53)²⁰

Thus, the confusion between egalitarianism and homogenization belongs to nationalist discourse and practice, and from here it occasionally permeates scholarly analysis.²¹

There was one area in which egalitarian appeals were particularly effective in engineering and shaping new communities: the military. The life of the barrack not only implemented, but made indispensable, a radical practice of equality. Once assumed that citizens are equal in peace times, 'equality in sacrifice' was ergo demanded in war times (Levi 1997). 'The first mass army depended ultimately upon a political revolution whose ideology, redolent of nationalism, stressed the *equality* and community of all Frenchmen' (Posen 1993, p. 83, emphasis added). In fact, military conscription has historically been used as a 'nation-building' device. We have previously noted the example of fascism, although liberal nationalists did barely differ in this respect. Compulsory military service is in turn related to the nationalist view of egalitarian relations: 'Only conscription could ensure equality of sacrifice. In addition, it would permit the government to mobilize and allocate the labor of the male population in an orderly, efficient, and sensible way' (Levi 1997, p. 144).

The expansion of military organization and its unremitting penetration into most areas of civil society became visible in periods preceding, accompanying and ensuing total war. A nearly mutual relationship can be established between war and egalitarian pleadings: the more extreme wars became, the more egalitarian the rhetoric accompanying them became. This was mandated also in order to bind the maximum number of citizens around the government. Indeed, the era of 'total war' imposed such a radical notion of 'egalitarianism' as to set in motion the unthinkable, including massive self-immolation. A visual illustration of the relationship between total war and mass suicide can be glimpsed in Oliver Hirschbiegel's film *Downfall* (*Der Untergang*, 2004) in which the feeling of comradeship accompanying the cult of the Führer led many to prefer death over surrender. But even the Third Reich's principle of egalitarian 'brotherhood', obviously confined to the superior German *volk*, cropped up along two levels: aristocratically segregated in its bunker, the Nazi select few were indifferent to the atrocious suffering brought upon the people they instructed to never surrender.

In short, the view that modern humans become 'modular', hence technically 'equal' to one another, is not reflected automatically in the rise of a new 'egalitarianism'. But equal availability to duties and obligations was unconditionally required in times of war, indeed legally stipulated by citizenship laws. Such modularity, flexibility and malleability rather served more aggressive political purposes. In fact, the army's promotion of societal uniformity and conformism was

based on ‘boot camp’ egalitarianism and comradeship, although under a rigid, inflexible hierarchical and disciplinary structure.

Conclusions

In an age often dominated by discourses on multiculturalism, it is strangely uncommon to encounter articulated analyses of the opposite trend – cultural homogenization. This article has attempted to provide a first corrective to such a theoretical vacuum, which touches most social sciences. The area is still under-theorized in ethnic, racial and nationalism studies as well, despite the flagrant links between cultural homogenization, discrimination, xenophobia and nationalism. With a few partial exceptions (Mann 1993; Smith 1998), the only methodical, sustained *longue durée* explanation about the nationalism-homogenization linkage has been advanced by Ernest Gellner. This is problematic, because, as I have attempted to demonstrate, Gellner’s theory is based on questionable concepts and flawed postulates (Conversi 2006b, 2007; Kaufmann and Conversi 2008).²²

First, I have focused on the importance of mass education for both industry and nation, while shedding light on Gellner’s use of key concepts such as language and culture. Then, I addressed the more substantial role of militarism and the army as avant-garde players in the promotion of forms of societal uniformity and conformism. Finally, I explored the common links between militarism and cultural homogenization underpinned by ‘egalitarian’ nationalism, with or without the impact of industrialization. I also questioned whether state-sponsored cultural change actually led to distinct, ethnically legitimated societies based on ‘egalitarian’ principles, as described by Gellner. In short, I claim, the relationship between the mass army and the school via the state was a mutual one and ‘egalitarian’ patriotism its operating framework: the ideology of nationalism provided the glue and direct linkage between all these spheres. My argument disagrees with Gellner’s treatment of nationalism as heralded by the ineluctable advance of industrialization, since it does not contemplate the mass army as a possible forge of cultural homogenization. This brings to light a major area of conceptual weakness in the current theory of nationalism, namely the insufficient recognition accorded to the role played by militarization in nationalizing processes.²³ Therefore, it is now necessary to draw attention to the importance of the modern army as a means of ‘crafting citizens’.

Another point is that much of the industrialization process concerned precisely the military sphere. That was certainly the case of France and Prussia and there is a large literature on the effects of industrialization and technology on warfare. Much of the industrial infrastructure, such as railroads and other communication networks,

aimed at rapidly supplying standing armies in both peace and war times. In Britain, the Navy represented the largest industry in the country already by 1714 (Plumb 1974, p. 124). In many other industrializing countries it is possible to speak of a ‘military-industrial complex’, a term which the sociologist Charles Wright Mills (1916–62) applied to the United States power pinnacle, while explicitly relating ‘military ascendancy’ to the rise of ‘mass society’ (Mills 1956).

My focus on militarism is not intended to entirely replace industrialization as a broader explanation for the rise of nationalism. It rather intends to accompany and complement it. By highlighting the importance of the military, the attention is concurrently shifted to the role of the state and the centrality of political power. State-centred approaches have been covered widely in the nationalism literature (see Breuilly 1993). Thus, my contribution is more expressly concerned with the state’s cultural homogenizing drive and its recurrent attraction to militarism and war-making via nationalism, particularly as underpinned by egalitarian rhetoric. Military developments have been at the heart of most major contemporary events. Thus, the collapse of the Soviet Union was mostly a consequence of unsustainable military spending, while the central role of the army in the breakup of Yugoslavia is also widely acknowledged.²⁴ Political decisions can affect everyday life, but can also shape, change and manipulate national identities.

Historians of fascism agree that World War I was the ‘cultural and social matrix from which fascist movements were born’ (Semelin 2006, p. 281), as it provided a mass mobilizing experience which preceded and inspired fascism. Likewise, I describe war as the ultimate homogenizer, arguing that the politics of cultural homogenization both anticipated and followed modern mass conscription, while both peaked in times of war. Twentieth-century episodes of massive human destruction are profoundly related to broader patterns of state-led cultural homogenization.

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Notes

1. The Italian writer, poet and film-director Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–75) presciently used the concept of ‘*homologation*’ to identify the even more pervasive kind of homogenization emerging in a post-national world ruled by large corporate interests. This he described as ‘the

brutally totalitarian reorganization and homogenisation (*omologazione*) of the planet' (Pasolini 1975, p. 63).

2. Spain's identity was based on an enduring civilizational quest for ceaseless military expansion. Once the *Reconquista* ended, it turned inward towards subjugating internal others (Conversi 2007).

3. For an excellent study of the complex relationship between language and nationalism and the crucial influence of Herderian thought on European identity formation, see Fishman (1997).

4. The list is too long to be quoted here. Most of these works take into account Clausewitz's classic *On War* (1976 [1820]). The concept of 'nationalization of the masses' is derived from George Mosse's (1975) seminal work.

5. Less dramatic cases include Sweden's Danish-speaking southernmost areas, slowly Swedified ensuing the Treaty of Roskilde (1658).

6. Although the final partition of Poland in 1795 is occasionally indicated as an alternative date, its impact on European development was negligible in comparison to the French Revolution. Arguably, not even the American Revolution (1776–83) had such an immediate impact on European cultural, political and military affairs.

7. John Lynn (1996, p. 127) revealed the stunning figure of seven million copies of various journals purchased for distribution in the army from July 1791 to July 1794 – even though most conscripts could not read or write.

8. Even the Algerian revolution against France in the 1950s can be described as 'inversion' of the *levée en masse* (Porch 2003), while mass mobilization in modern China (Waldron 2003) and Vietnam (Lockhart 2003) incorporated various elements of the *levée*

9. During this expansionist age, entire populations were annihilated as an indirect consequence of imperial policies and direct consequence of settlers' expansion. Even during the last days of colonial rule, British authorities established their own 'gulag' system to control the Kikuyu in Kenya, ritually engaging in torture and murder of children, elderly, disabled, women and men alike (Elkins 2005). As late as 1968, the entire population of the 'British Indian Ocean Territory' of Diego Garcia in the Chagos islands was secretly deported to leave spaces for an US air base (Curtis 2003, p. 414–30). Yet, these rarely reached the systematic results of extreme 'paligenetic' nationalism arising in core European states since the beginning of the century.

10. The late nineteenth century was also the age of *laissez-faire* economy-induced droughts and floods in which millions perished: the 'late Victorian Holocausts', as Mike Davis (2001) call them, were a consequence of the complex interaction between climate change, unleashed market forces and imperialist rapacity.

11. Only recently the role of the army in the rise of fascism has been fully analysed. Post-World War I victorious military elites embraced fascist ideology to fight against the 'ingratitude' of ordinary Italians associated with persistent pacifism and anti-patriotic 'decadence' (Mondini 2006). On war as a tool for fascist nation-building, see Gentile (2003).

12. Gellner (2006) tactically disregarded this correlation in *Nations and Nationalism*, notwithstanding his vision of industrialization as the agent spawning nationalism throughout Europe. In fact, Roman Szporluk rightly observes that Gellner's 'own system, his grand vision of global scientific and industrial transformation, did not allow for the possibility of Auschwitz, or for the Gulag, and did not claim to have an *ex-post* explanation of that occurrence' (Szporluk 1998, pp. 36–7).

13. For a broader anthology of World War I poetry, see Roberts (1998), where Wilfred Owen's famous poem is accompanied by Siegfried Sassoon, Edward Thomas, Thomas Hardy and others.

14. Most scholars of nationalism would dismiss Giddens' use of some key concepts. He gives the following psychological definition of nationalism as 'the affiliation of individuals to a set of symbols and beliefs emphasizing commonality among the members of the political order'. Even more problematic is his definition of the nation as 'a collectivity existing within a clearly demarcated territory, which is subject to a unitary administration, reflexively

monitored both by the internal state apparatus and those of other states' (Giddens 1985, p. 116). These out-dated definitions are rarely used in the contemporary ethnicity and nationalism literature. For a critique of this traditional position, see Connor (1994, 2004).

15. Schools were divided along four grades: primary, secondary, *lycée* (gymnasium basically run on military lines) and technical school (Mayeur 2004).

16. Napoleon's penchant for state-wide military discipline has been related to Napoleon's military formation (Colin 2001).

17. See also various quotes by Ernest Renan (1823–92) in Girardet (1996), where the French nationalist philosopher reveals how the Franco-German War contributed to his change of views of Germany from a land of free thought and impartial science to a national enemy.

18. While some authors underline the unpopularity of conscription and describe anti-conscription revolts since Napoleon's times (Esdaile 1998), Bond adopts a more pro-military line: 'According to numerous memoirs, military service was extremely popular with many conscripts' (Bond 1998, p. 35). Yet, the scholarship on anti-conscript revolts is far from corroborating the above sentence (see Cobb 1970; Levi 1997).

19. Although the industrial revolution began in Britain, there is an ongoing debate as to whether English nationalism developed before industrialization (see Smith 1998, 2004). This literature presents a radical challenge to Gellner's industry-centered view.

20. Despite Wimmer's occasional reference to 'shared culture', his argument is really about 'shared ethnicity'.

21. Such an unintentional appropriation of nationalist terminology is part of a broader problem affecting the social sciences, namely the subconscious, inadvertent practice of 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

22. For a well-articulated critique of Gellner's 'monoculturalism', see Tambini (1996).

23. However, Smith (1981) has emphasized war as a means of ethnic survival, while Mann (1993), pp. 402–43) has more thoroughly focused on the crucial role of the military.

24. The Yugoslav state emerged from the ashes of World War II was mostly founded and built around the Yugoslav People's Army. It collapsed when the latter began to attack the federal Republics' Territorial Defence units, created in the early 1970s as autonomous military 'regiments' under the loose command of the Yugoslav Army (Conversi 2000).

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