ELIE KEDOURIE MEMORIAL LECTURE

Nationalism and the History of Ideas

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Introductory Comments

A MEMORIAL LECTURE SHOULD TAKE as its point of departure some shared interest between the person commemorated and the lecturer. Kedourie wrote a short book on nationalism and edited and introduced another book on the subject. I have written a general study of national-ism.[1] That accounts for the first word in the title of the lecture. But what aspect of this huge subject would it be appropriate to talk about?

Kedourie begins *Nationalism*—one of the classical studies of the subject—with a striking assertion of his central thesis: 'Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the 19th century' (p. 1). This provides us with a subject (nationalism), a category to which the sub-ject belongs (doctrine), a process by which nationalism comes about (invention), a place (Europe) and a time (*c.*1800).

Doctrine can be variously defined as principle, tenet, even dogma, also as an idea or set of ideas which is taught, propagated, preached.[2] What-ever precise definition one selects, nationalism is thereby firmly located within the framework of the history of ideas. It seemed appropriate there-fore to complete the title as 'Nationalism and the history of ideas' with the intention of exploring how interpretations stemming from that

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[1] E. Kedourie, *Nationalism* (1960); id. (edited and with an introduction), *Nationalism in Africa and Asia* (New York & Cleveland, 1970). J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (2nd edn., Manchester & Chicago, 1993).

[2] I used *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1993).

historical sub-discipline could be connected to other ways of approaching the history of nationalism.[3]

Staying with Kedourie one sees one way in which that connection is made.

The second sentence of *Nationalism* establishes the *ideological* character of nationalism ('It pretends to supply a criterion for the determination of the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively its own . . .'). The third sentence defines nationalism: 'Briefly, the doctrine holds that humanity is naturally defined into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be ascertained, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government' (p. 1). This is as good a definition of nationalism as one could ask for and has affinities with those employed by Gellner, Smith, and myself.[4] Differences arise not over the definition so much as the force given to the emphasis on nationalism being an invented doctrine rather than, say, an argument deployed by a political movement or a way of labelling certain popular sentiments.[5]

The use of the noun 'doctrine' and the verb 'invent' direct our attention to the propagators of this central idea. Much of Kedourie's book, focusing on such writers as Kant, Fichte, and Herder, argues that concepts of self-determination and unique national identity were combined by these intellectuals in a special way to produce the doctrine of nationalism.

Having established the mode of 'invention' one needs to trace out the

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[3] I should make it clear that I am writing here specifically about the history of *political* ideas and many of the arguments that follow could not necessarily be applied to other kinds of intellectual history.

[4] Gellner: 'Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent.' (*Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983), p. 1.) Smith: 'an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of self-government and independence on behalf of a group, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential "nation"'. (A. D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (1998), p. 188.) Breuilly: '. . . political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such action with nationalist arguments. A nationalist argument is a political doctrine built upon three basic assertions: (a) there exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character; (b) the interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values; (c) the nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty.' (*Nationalism and the State*, p. 2.)

[5] I point out the very different ways nationalism is approached with these three emphases in 'Culture, doctrine, politics: three ways of constructing nationalism' in *Nationalism in Europe. Past and Present*, edited by J. Beramendi, R. Máiz & X. Núñez (Santiago de Compostela, 1994), pp. 127–34.

mode of 'propagation' in order to make connections with the world of politics. Usually the connecting agency is presented as an 'intelligentsia', a group which develops under specifically modern conditions. This intelligentsia finds that nationalist doctrine illuminates and offers principled solutions to its problematic situation and can serve to promote its interests and power. How this can be done is explored in the last two chapters of *Nationalism* and in *Nationalism in Africa and Asia*. The extracts in this latter book detail the ways in which various African and Asian intellectuals appropriated and adapted the doctrine of nationalism to their own situations and purposes.

After establishing the origins and appeal of nationalist doctrine within the field of the history of ideas (intelligentsias are, after all, defined in terms of the centrality of ideas to their existence), one needs to account for the capacity of an intelligentsia to mobilise popular support and achieve power. One condition which enables this is the breakdown of established political traditions following the French revolution which also created exalted expectations of what political action can achieve. As Kwame Nkrumah, the first successful African nationalist put it: 'Seek ye first the political kingdom and everything else shall be added unto you.'[6] Social transformation contributed to the erosion of traditional politics by creating new classes of people (uprooted peasants, urban proletarians, a new massive lower middle class) ready to follow the propagators of nationalism with their alluring and simple promises. More pragmatically, the weakening of the major powers due to war and other conflicts amongst themselves provided nationalists with a point of entry into the world of politics, especially in the turmoil following the end of both world wars. Finally the doctrine of nationalism could be appropriated and used by those who did not really believe in it. Bismarck and Cavour, rather than Fichte and Mazzini, were the makers of modern Germany and Italy.

Nevertheless, in making this journey from study to state, books to politics, nationalism continued to bear the mark of its birth as a doctrine. In the introduction to the fourth edition of *Nationalism*, published posthumously in 1993, Kedourie makes this clear when drawing a comparison between 'ideological' politics and 'constitutional' politics:

> In constitutional politics the object in view is to attend to the common concerns

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[6] The phrase is quoted by Tom Mboya, the Kenyan nationalist, in the extract from his reflections on mass nationalism in Kedourie, *Nationalism in Africa and Asia*, p. 482.

of a particular society, to safeguard it against foreign assaults, to mediate disagreements and conflicts between various groups through political institutions, through legislation and the administration of justice, and to uphold the law as being above and beyond sectional interests however important or powerful.

Ideological politics is very different. Such a politics is concerned to establish a state of affairs in society and state such that everyone, as they say in old-fashioned novels, will live happily ever after. To do so, the ideologist will, to borrow Plato's analogy in the *Republic*, look upon state and society as a canvas which has to be wiped clean, so that his vision of justice, virtue and happiness can be painted on this *tabula rasa*. (pp. xii–xiv)

For Kedourie nationalism is but one kind of ideological politics.[7] The relationship between the history of ideas and of politics is clearly different for these two kinds of politics. Ideological politics is about the attempt to impose ideas in the sphere of politics. Constitutional politics, by contrast, takes its lead from the world as it is.[8]

For Kedourie nationalism begins life as an idea and once it becomes a powerful politics is characterised by a commitment to imposing that idea upon the world rather than seeing politics as a necessary means of

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[7] Kedourie looks to pre-modern millennial movements as an earlier form of 'ideological politics'. Others have connected socialism and nationalism in a similar way. See, for example, J. L. Talmon, *The Myth of the Nation and the Vision of Revolution* (1981). Kedourie clearly saw socialism in this light too (see his Introduction to the fourth edition of *Nationalism*, pp. xvi–xviii).

[8] Kedourie, in my view, ducks the issue when he writes:

To narrate the spread, influence and operation of nationalism in various polities is to write the history of events, rather than of ideas. It is a matter of understanding the polity in its particular time, place and circumstances, and of following the activity of specific political agents acting in the context of their own specific and peculiar conditions. The coherence of contingent events is not the same as the coherence of contingent ideas, and the historian has to order his strategies accordingly: horses for courses. ('Afterword', in the fourth edition of *Nationalism* (Oxford, 1993), p. 139)

In one sense this is clearly right; these are distinct subjects with their own distinct ways of hanging together. However, if one claims, as Kedourie did, that the significance of the invention of the nationalist idea is because of its capacity to give rise to a particular kind of politics ('ideological politics'), it is hard to see how one can evade the issue of connecting the two subjects. It muddies the water to write about 'contingency'. All good historians know that no particular history can be reduced to the working out of this or that theory. However, no particular history cannot be understood without resort to theoretical considerations, e.g. about how political ideas and actions should be related to one another, because this is not something open to simple observation of the 'facts' and yet is something which must be explored unless one believes that ideas remain in the study and politics is no more than a series of literally thoughtless actions. Kedourie himself advances one particular theory connecting nationalist doctrine to ideological politics; he cannot then prohibit others outlining other ways of making the connection.

allowing the world as it is ('particular society') to get along with its business ('common concerns') without intolerable levels of violence, conflict, or sectional imposition. It is precisely the detachment of the nationalist idea from the 'world' which makes it appropriate to start its study in the field of the history of ideas. By contrast it is very difficult to see how 'constitutional' politics can have an intellectual history separate from the practical actions in which it engages.

Nationalism can thus be understood as primarily falling within the field of the 'history of ideas' if one subscribes to this argument: its origins and character (an invented doctrine), its means of diffusion (propagation by intellectuals who become politically significant) and its style ('ideological politics'). Alternatively, to see nationalism primarily as arising from some non-ideational identity (e.g., ethnicity) or acting as an ideological expression of prior interest (e.g., of a class) or being deployed as a pragmatic and non-innovative rhetoric in certain situations (e.g., as a justification) would involve a failure to grasp the novel and transforming power of this doctrine, to fall into what Kedourie nicely calls 'sociological temptation'.[9] The reason why such temptation is to be rejected is that first, one can establish no general 'social condition' which can be correlated with the emergence of a powerful nationalism and second, that it carries with it the danger of not appreciating that political ideas and related actions possess an autonomy which cannot be reduced to an expression or manipulation of some pre-existing sentiment, interest or dilemma.

Kedourie presents a version of this argument in a powerful and lucid way; no one reading these books seriously could ever imagine that the history of ideas is an esoteric academic domain that 'worldly' historians and political analysts trying to understand the 'real' world can happily ignore. I am persuaded by many of the central arguments, above all, those concerning the modernity and peculiarity of nationalism and the limited explanatory power of what might be called sociological approaches.

Nevertheless, there remain great problems concerning how one characterises nationalism within the field of the history of ideas and how one makes connections between that history and the history of political action. In what follows I briefly explore some of these problems.

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[9] *Nationalism*, p. 140.

Reflections on the 'History of Ideas'

The history of ideas is a complex field marked by different, even conflicting approaches. In his introduction to the fourth edition of *Nationalism* Kedourie provides some interesting information about how he came to write the book a quarter of a century earlier and this can serve as a starting point for considering these different approaches. Work on the book began as a series of lectures, a task assigned to him by Michael Oakeshott when Kedourie was appointed assistant lecturer at the London School of Economics.

This was in the 1950s when nationalism could appear to be a strictly historical subject. The most extreme forms of nationalism had been defeated and discredited with the victory over the Axis powers in 1945 and the subsequent construction of supra-national power blocs oriented to the USA and the USSR. Admittedly these blocs were themselves organised as associations of nation-states (even the USSR was organised into national republics and its satellite states in the Warsaw Pact were regarded as national). However, these were nation-states which officially disavowed nationalism, even if they might be regarded as its products. E. H. Carr felt able to publish a book in 1945 with the title *Nationalism and After*. There remained the challenge of dismantling European overseas empires but this could be understood as a task of 'constitutional politics', framed in civic and territorial terms and justified in the universalist languages of liberal democracy or socialism which satisfied the contrasting anti-imperialist rhetorics of the two superpowers.

It was understandable, therefore, that one might choose to write about nationalism as an idea first and foremost. In different ways this approach had characterised the work of the two pioneering historians of nationalism in general—Hans Kohn and Carlton Hayes.[10] What mattered, Kedourie stated, was to establish something about the origins and development of one of the 'organising ideas in the political experience of the Western world'.[11] By the time *Nationalism in Africa and Asia* was published in 1970 nationalism, e.g., in Indo-China and in colonial Africa, had

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[10] Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York, 1967, originally published in 1944); Carlton Hayes, *The Historical Evolution of Nationalism* (New York, 1931). For Kohn a distinction between an 'eastern' and 'western' form of the idea provided a bedrock for analysis. For Hayes the way nationalism was coupled with some other political idea—e.g., liberalism or radicalism or fascism—provided him with both a typology and chronology.

[11] *Nationalism* (4th edn.), p. xii.

re-emerged as a powerful politics which gave the study of this organising idea a renewed importance.

This attention to an 'organising idea' can be linked to the acknowledgement Kedourie makes in *Nationalism* to A. O. Lovejoy.[12] Lovejoy more than anyone else established the 'history of ideas' as a distinct intellectual domain. He outlined and practised a method which regarded the history of ideas as the study of organising ideas or, as Lovejoy termed them, 'unit-ideas'.[13] In *Nationalism* Kedourie argued that nationalism had been formed by combining certain pre-existing ideas (i.e., unit-ideas) in a particular way.

This approach to the history of ideas has fallen out of fashion. Quentin Skinner succinctly summarises problems with the approach. It tends, he argues: '. . . to leave us with a history almost bereft of recognisable agents, a history in which we find Reason itself overcoming Custom, Progress confronting the Great Chain of Being'.[14] This is a just criticism of the cruder ways in which the approach is practised. However, in masterly hands much of the criticism is disarmed through detailed analysis of key thinkers. Kedourie closely explores ideas of Kant, Fichte, and Herder. Kant proposed a radical idea of moral autonomy for the individual, an autonomy which owed nothing to God, the world or society. Fichte transferred this idea to the collective plane of the universal ego. Herder argued that humanity was divided into distinct and incommensurable cultural groups. Combine the ideas in a certain way and a novel and powerful doctrine is produced.

Skinner, however, points to problems even when analysing particular texts and thinkers:

> Critics have pointed out that if we wish, say, to understand a work such as Hobbes's *Leviathan*, it cannot be enough to furnish an analysis of the proposition and arguments contained in the text. We also need to be able to grasp what Hobbes was *doing* in presenting just those propositions and arguments. We need to be able, that is, to recognise how far he may have been accepting and

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[12] Preface to the first edition of *Nationalism* which points out that Lovejoy did not write on nationalism as such; the debt Kedourie acknowledges is in terms of how to write about ideas.

[13] A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: a study of the history of an idea* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936) In the introduction to that book Lovejoy writes of using a method analagous to that of the analytical chemist: 'In dealing with the history of philosophical doctrines, for example, it cuts into the hard-and-fast individual systems and, for its own purposes, breaks them up into their component elements, into what may be called their unit-ideas' (p. 3).

[14] In the section 'What is Intellectual History' in *What is history today?* edited by Juliet Gardiner (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 110.

reiterating accepted commonplaces, or perhaps rephrasing and reworking them, or perhaps criticising and repudiating them altogether in order to obtain a new perspective on a familiar theme. But we obviously cannot hope to gain such a sense of the identity of the text, and of its author's basic purposes in writing it, if we confine ourselves simply to analysing the contents of the text itself.[15]

Skinner developed such an approach to the history of political thought, one which situates texts and thinkers very precisely in their context.[16]

What I had not realised before I began working on this talk was that Kedourie himself practised this contextualising approach. I read his posthumously published book *Hegel and Marx*.[17] Here, for example in the treatment of Hegel, one has precisely what Skinner demanded. Hegel is situated within an intellectual milieu responding to certain perceived problems of modernity. Above all, criticisms of Christianity are highlighted as providing a matrix of preoccupations, idioms, and ideas which informed much of Hegel's work. The approach illuminates just why there was an idealisation of the Hellenic world at this time, why and how modernity was seen as a fragmenting and alienating experience. It makes clear the hostility of many of these intellectuals to Kant as the thinker who systematised and absolutised this condition of alienation by dividing the human faculties into distinct and incommensurable capacities for truth, aesthetic and moral judgements. The concern of this intellectual milieu was to argue against this position and to sketch out ways in which alienation could be overcome and in its place a unity, both at the level of the individual and of the collective, could be achieved. Hegel developed a powerful and original set of arguments which involved a thorough historicisation of the human condition and the elaboration of a dialectical process both at the level of experience and of structure which gave a direction to human development and pointed to the final overcoming of alienation. These arguments can only be fully understood within that milieu, its characteristic linguistic usages and intellectual preoccupations.

Satisfying though it is in the field of the history of ideas this contextualising approach however presents even greater problems than the

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[15] In the section 'What is Intellectual History' in *What is history today?* pp. 110–11.
[16] For example his two volume *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1978) covering the period of the Renaissance and the Reformation.
[17] *Hegel and Marx: introductory lectures* (Oxford, 1995).

'organising ideas' approach for anyone trying to connect political ideas and actions.[18]

The 'organising idea' approach establishes connection by means of what might be called the principles of transmigration and combination. A central idea is taken up by one thinker; then reappears, differently deployed and combined with other ideas, in the work of a subsequent thinker. Thus, for example, the notion of 'self-determination' is deployed by Kant as a quality of the individual but reappears in Fichte as a quality of the universal ego. Focused now on a collective subject and connected to the idea of 'nation' elaborated by Herder as a cultural collective subject, one can establish a set of connections between Kant, Fichte, and Herder which in turn sustains the argument about the invention of nationalist doctrine.

However, a contextualist might well argue that the 'organising idea' plays such a different role in the work of these different thinkers that it is not the same 'idea' at all. Kant's notion of self-determination is so bound up with his analysis of the faculties of individuals that to transfer it to a collective subject alters completely its meaning. Fichte's concern with a fundamental cultural remaking of the nation through education and deliberate policy is at odds with Herder's understanding of nations as unintended and long-term products of cultural diversity.[19]

Nevertheless, 'organising ideas' do provide connections through the principles of transmigration and combination, a base line from which one can go on to write a linear history that goes beyond mere narrative.

By contrast, there are great obstacles in the way of establishing even a narrative, let alone an analytical long-run story of nationalism with the contextual approach. I briefly summarise a number of the major problems.

1   The issue of the 'origins' of ideas is neglected and there is no apparent logic to the ways ideas are used and passed on. Instead one steps

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[18] Which may help explain why Kedourie used a rather different approach when he came to write about nationalism.

[19] The differences become especially apparent when one considers how Fichte radically shifted from an originally Kantian position to a collectivist and perfectionist political nationalism which was utterly foreign both to Kant and Herder and which was only to acquire any intellectual and political signifance with the rise of new kinds of right-wing nationalism from the late 19th century. For a lucid philosophical analysis see Gunnar Beck, 'From Kant to Hegel—Johann Gottlieb Fichte's Theory of Self-Consciousness', in *History of European Ideas* 22/4 (1996), pp. 275–94, as well as id., *J. G. Fichte's Theory of Freedom and his Doctrine of Political Perfectionism* (Ph.D. thesis, Oxford, 1996).

into the stream of historical ideas and encounters the various ways ideas are deployed in particular texts or in the work of particular thinkers. The concern with the intellectual context focuses attention on issues of derivation and innovation measured against that broader context rather than on validity or political impact.

2   We are then in danger of entering a world of Wittgensteinian language games. In such a world every move/connection actually made is permissible because there is no supra-contextual logic which will forbid particular moves or prescribe others. Equally there is no world beyond the intellectual/linguistic milieu which might check (in both senses of the word: restrain and validate) what can be said, or at the very least select certain ways of thinking/talking for success, significance and centrality and others for failure, obscurity, and marginality.

3   The danger then is that we become trapped in a self-enclosed world of texts because we have no lever from outside which we can use to establish movement and, therefore, connection from one moment to another. At best one can get a narrative which tells a story but which cannot work out why the story proceeds as it does. At worst we can end up with a series of disconnected stories.

The problems have become especially clear in the work of those who describe their work as 'discourse analysis' where nationalism can come to be regarded as its own, uncaused creator through its capacity to shape discourse and thus the world into its preferred form. The recent publication of a number of books on the theme of 'narrating the nation' are testimony to where such an approach can take us.[20]

To connect political ideas to actions one must as a matter of principle posit a particular kind of linkage between the two in a way which neither the unit-idea nor the contextual approach to history of ideas does. For nationalism the framework I propose involves understanding the path to political modernity as a crisis of structural transformation which poses a tough intellectual challenge to political thinkers whose 'solutions' in turn inform how political agents will act in this transformed situation. If such actions prove successful, the informing idea will become accepted, eventually turning into the 'common sense' of modern politics.

Such an approach should make it clear that historians of nationalism ignore the history of ideas at their peril. However, it also points to difficul-

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[20] See, for example, H. K. Bhabha (ed), *Nation and Narration* (1990).

ties in understanding nationalism as 'ideological politics' contrasted to 'constitutional politics', or as 'doctrine' as opposed to 'action'. Rather one has to understand the idea of nationalism as one strenuous attempt to respond to specifically political problems of modernity and which carries conviction because of the political appropriateness of its analysis and proferred solution. The central idea can and does inform political styles which seek utterly to change the world but it also informs political styles which seek to cope with existing problems and it provides possibilities for constructive political action by groups without utopian visions they wish to impose upon the world. Without this broad and flexible quality nationalism could never have become so central in the modern world.

To put flesh on this argument I return to where Kedourie started in *Nationalism*, the German lands around 1800.

Political Ideas and Political Action: the Case of Germany

Germany in the late eighteenth century

Germany in the late eighteenth century was marked by great political diversity (to say fragmentation would imply that large, unitary states be regarded as the norm). At one extreme were the Habsburg and Hohenzollern dynasties, at the other hundreds of imperial knights and counts. In between were ranged smaller princely, ecclesiastical and city states. These were loosely organised within the Holy Roman Empire, the elective emperorship normally being held by a Habsburg and with a variety of institutions—legislative, administrative, and judicial—in which confessional and other interests were coordinated and to some degree balanced.[21] Contemporaries and historians have pointed to the deficiencies of these imperial arrangements but recent work has emphasised positive features.[22] For the argument of this essay what especially matters is that the empire promoted a political culture in which diversity and loosely

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[21] For good, concise introductions in English see Peter H. Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire 1495–1806* (1999) and Brendan Simms, *The Struggle for Mastery in Germany*, *1779–1850* (1998), ch. 2 & 3.

[22] Above all, K. O. von Aretin, *Heiliges Römisches Reich 1776 bis 1806. Reichsverfassung und Staatssouveränität*, 2 vols (Wiesbaden, 1967). See also his more recent book *Das Alte Reich 1648–1806. Bd.3: Das Reich und der österreichisch-preußische Dualismus* (*1754–1806*) (Stuttgart, 1997).

shared powers were as, if not more, important than ideas of territoriality and state sovereignty and this continued to inform political values after the formal end of the empire in 1806.[23] Both major powers—although appealing to notions of Germany when acting within the imperial framework—regarded themselves in non- and supra-national terms. Both ruled over physically separated territories and linguistically and ethnically diverse populations. Legitimacy was based upon the dynasty which had grown increasingly secular as territorial transfers brought confessionally diverse groups under one prince. Such transfers were achieved without too much disruption partly because there were at least tacit agreements not to impose alien beliefs, customs, or laws upon newly acquired lands.[24]

Agriculture dominated although there were areas in western and southern Germany where trading, manufacturing, and urban life assumed prominence. Despite administrative centralisation under such rulers as Joseph II and Frederick II much state power was still wielded indirectly. Local administration remained in the hands of noble landowners; soldiers were conscripted by local levies and the noble/peasant relationship was reproduced as that of officer and common soldier.[25]

In town and country economic and political power was fused through privilege. The noble landowner administered local justice and represented his locality to the centre through estate-based representative assemblies. Guild masters had a privileged position within urban government. This structure was being eroded in various ways. Demographic growth produced an under-class which was excluded from corporate arrangements. Relocation of some manufacturing in the countryside evaded guild controls and gave rise to scattered groups of domestic workers connected to extensive markets through merchant capital. Some landowners and princes were attracted to peasant emancipation which would remove

[23] A recent work has argued even more positively that reform ideas within this imperial political culture actually anticipated, indeed even shaped ideas of a single nation-state. Wolfgang Burgdorf, *Reichskonstitution und Nation. Verfassungsreformprojekte für das Heilige Römische Reich Deutscher Nation im politischen Schriftum von 1648 bis 1806* (Mainz, 1998). For the English reader there is a good review article dealing with this book by Joachim Whaley, 'Constitutional Reform Projects 1648–1806', *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute London* XXI/2 (November 1999), pp. 68–73.

[24] For a good account of the manner in which late 18th-century diplomacy proceeded see P. W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763–1848* (Oxford, 1994), especially pp. 1–11.

[25] See, for example, O. Büsch, *Militärsystem und Soziallleben im alten Preußen, 1713–1807* (Berlin, 1962).

obligations and create a more flexible labour force. Coupled with the drive of some princes to abolish the restrictive web of privileges and level out the differences between their subjects, this undermined traditional corporations and estates as well as encouraging ideas which envisaged a society based on different principles.[26]

Pre-nationalist conceptions of the national

Within the corporate framework it is difficult to see how nationalism can take hold. To relate political legitimacy to shared national culture or values threatened the Christian and dynastic justifications of authority. To stress commonalities across the social scale ran against the hierarchy of privilege which was in part one of different cultures. No one of political significance subscribed to ideas of popular or national sovereignty. State, let alone national boundaries were not closely patrolled nor state membership tightly defined because for many aspects of everyday life the units which mattered were those of the noble manor, the municipality, the parish.[27]

How then, could the doctrine of nationalism come to be invented in the German lands as Kedourie suggests?

One possible source was campaigns to reform the Holy Roman Empire. Conflicts over control and policy within the empire had deployed a rhetoric of patriotism. Reform programmes were likewise couched in such terms. However, these had only limited national connotations. For Austria and Prussia appeals to German patriotism were a function of dynastic interest. Other states saw imperial institutions as a shield against Austria and Prussia. The appeal to German patriotism was confined to narrow elites.[28]

Another way the national idea could be promoted was through elite culture. By the late eighteenth century German had acquired the status of a major literary language even if the preferred language of diplomacy

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[26] For details see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte: Bd. 1. Vom Feudalismus des Alten Reiches bis zur Defensiven Modernisierung der Reformära 1700–1815* (Göttingen, 1987), pp. 59–217; and Jürgen Kocka, *Weder Stand noch Klasse. Unterschichten um 1800* (Berlin, 1990), especially ch. 2–4.

[27] The 'structural' argument for the irrelevance and, therefore, non-existence of nationalism has been put most cogently by Gellner. See his *Nations and Nationalism*, ch. 2 'Culture in Agrarian Society'. I would stress more the corporate arrangement of privilege rather than just the agrarian economy but I draw heavily upon Gellner's ideas.

[28] But for a more positive argument see Burgdorf, *Reichskonstitution und Nation*.

and government remained French. The formation of an educated bourgeoisie based largely on church, law, and administration was in part achieved through reform and expansion of universities whose students were mixed together from different states.[29]

Such people were excluded from locally based systems of privilege. They communicated across local and state boundaries through common readership of periodical and other literature and across status boundaries through involvement in theatres, reading circles, and cultural associations. Although politically conformist and economically marginal this could give rise to a bourgeois public self-consciously embodying German culture.[30] Within this bourgeois public one can locate especially important reform impulses within Lutheranism. It is no accident that most of the key figures in the history of the national idea in Germany in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century share this background, e.g. Kant, Herder and Schleiermacher, and that Jewish, Catholic and Calvinist thinkers are under-represented in these circles and activities.

This is apparent in a recent study of the development of biography as a distinctively bourgeois practice.[31] In this genre the individual came to be presented as a morally autonomous subject capable of shaping himself (rarely herself) and the world; Christianity was rendered increasingly undogmatic and ecumenical, subsumed within a catalogue of specifically bourgeois virtues of duty, work, non-sexual love, merit, peace, and *Bildung*. Maurer argues that these virtues challenged those associated with the traditional structures of privilege.

However, this bourgeois public was not and did not regard itself as a

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[29] For a recent account of reform campaigns and the features of the bourgeoisie in this period see J. Echternkamp, *Der Aufstieg des deutschen Nationalismus (1770–1840)* (Frankfurt/M & New York, 1998), especially pp. 41–159.

[30] The classic study of how this bourgeoisie was constituted through the development of a 'public sphere' is Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* (Neuwied, 1962), translated by T. Burger and F. Lawrence under the title *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, Mass., 1989. An impressive amount of research on the German bourgeoisie and the public sphere has subsequently developed. For surveys of some of that literature in English I refer to two review articles I have written: 'Liberalism and the German bourgeoisie: Germany in comparative perspective', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 32 (1992), pp. 384–404; 'The Elusive Class: some critical remarks on the historiography of the bourgeoisie', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 38 (1998), pp. 385–95.

[31] Michael Maurer, *Die Biographie des Bürgers. Lebensformen und Denkweisen in der formativen Phase des deutschen Bürgertums (1680–1815)* (Göttingen, 1996). I have reviewed this at some length in *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute London*, XXI/1 (May 1999), pp. 22–9. This was published as a 'Debate' review and Maurer's response was published in the next issue of the *Bulletin*, XXI/2 (November 1999), pp. 42–6.

political force. Bourgeois figures obeyed the law and served their princes. Nevertheless, as an 'outsider' class—even if politically quietist—their moral and cultural styles constituted an implicit critique of the established political world. For example, biographers emphasised the bourgeois virtues of princes, clerics, or nobles in justifying their conduct and claim to authority. Privilege and power was only merited if it exhibited such virtues. This ran together with the policy of some rulers and their bourgeois officials to promote legal reforms which justified privilege in terms of services to the state.[32]

There was a cultural critique of the courtly world—a world depicted in terms of sexual immorality, intrigue, idleness, personal vanity, and ambition, oriented to war and glory. This culture was presented as essentially *French*. German courts were condemned for imitating French styles. French was the language of diplomacy and high culture and many of these bourgeois critics were pained by Frederick the Great's strictures on the German language.[33] Their sensitivities were associated with the construction of Germany as a 'cultured' language, bearer of a national literature as good if not better than those of other high cultures.

Another feature of this national cultural idea derived from the enlightenment notion of 'stages of civilisation'. This idea of progress, presented as a shift from feudal to commercial society, from status to contract, from distinction by birth to distinction by achievement naturally appealed to bourgeois figures as it enhanced their self-image and sense of future prospects.[34]

The national idea also established connections between stages and induced a certain ambivalence towards the idea of progress. This can be seen in positive evaluations made of the 'noble savage' compared to alienated modern man, as Kedourie noted of the veneration in which Hegel and his milieu held the ancient Greeks. The veneration was of the Greeks, not the ancient world generally, of a people politically divided and subsequently to fall under the Roman yoke.

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[32] As, for example, with the Prussian *Allgemeines Landrecht*. See the first section of R. Koselleck, *Preußen zwischen Reform und Revolution. Allgemeines Landrecht, Verwaltung und soziale Bewegung von 1791 bis 1848* (3rd edn., Munich, 1989).

[33] This did have the effect of making it difficult for some time to present Frederick as a national hero. See Peter Paret, *Art as history: episodes in the culture and politics of 19th century Germany* (Princeton, 1988), ch. 1, 'Art as History; History as Politics: *The History of Frederick the Great* by Kugler and Menzel'.

[34] For much of the argument that follows I am indebted to Echternkamp, *Der Aufstieg des deutschen Nationalismus*.

Connections were also made to pre-Christian Germans. The notion of Germany as an *Ursprache* underpinned Fichte's argument of the need to purge this original language of alien accretions.[35] An interest in pre-Christian culture—e.g. the popularity of the forgery of the Ossian epic which supported a claim to ancient Welsh identity—was linked to the vision of a German–Celtic epoch. Just as the Greeks had their epics, above all, those of Homer, so did the Germans, e.g. the *Nibelungen-lieder*.[36] Germans had the peculiar distinction, unlike the French, of having successfully resisted the expansion of Rome, above all with the victory of Arminius/Hermann over Roman legions in AD 9.[37]

Only against this background of an ambivalent combination of ideas of a continuous national history and a cosmopolitan view of history as progress can one understand how the very different ideas of moral autonomy, national diversity, and collective cultural assertion against the conquering French could be combined and received within German circles. Kedourie's 'organising ideas' approach requires reinforcement from this 'contextualising approach', one which extends beyond strictly intellectual history to cultural history.

However, such ideas were difficult to turn to political account and attempts to do so were for a long time of marginal significance. Indeed, by the time German nationalism achieved political significance its ideological expression took on a rather different form. To see why, we must look more closely at the political arrangements of the German lands.

Phases of political change

I distinguish three phases: peaceful state reform from the end of the Seven Years War (1763) to the onset of war with France in 1792; continual war and political upheaval from 1792 to 1815; restoration 1815–48. A more detailed account would qualify these broad distinctions but certainly the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars marked a clear break between what

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[35] Above all in his *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (*1807/08*) in J. G. Fichte, *Werke*, Bd.7 (Berlin, 1846), edited by I. H. Fichte (pp. 257–452). For English readers see *Addresses to the German Nation*, translated by R. F. Jones & G. H. Turnbull (Westport, Conn., 1922, reprinted 1979). The points about German as a pure and original language are especially developed in the fourth address, 'Germans and other Teutons compared'.

[36] See, for example, Peter Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the rise of historicism* (1975), especially ch. 8, 'Structure of Development and Appreciation of the Unique'.

[37] For some of the intellectual background to this manner of thinking see Martin Thom, *Republics, Nations and Tribes* (London & New York, 1995).

came before and after. Each phase can be associated with tensions between certain political styles. The first phase is marked by tensions between 'patriotism' and 'absolutism', the second between 'revolution from above' and rejection of radical reform; the third between 'restoration' and 'constitutionalism'. To connect nationalist ideas to the world of politics, we must place them within this context.

In phase one reform impulses primarily expressed themselves in terms of disinterested improvement at state level. This involved appeals to 'citizens' but as aids to the ruler rather than as an independent political force. This sense of an improving spirit, often expressed through the establishment of civic associations, was commonly termed 'patriotism' but oriented to the particular polity, not Germany as a whole. The Hamburg 'Patriotic Association' was typical. It aimed to rationalise the state and reduce interference in the economy and in private and religious life and it stood in a close and supportive relationship to the government.[38] The state was increasingly presented as a service state, implicitly justified by its capacity to serve its subjects. This notion of service extended to the prince and placed a stress upon the obligations of ruler to subject as much as the other way around. If such reforms eroded privilege, they exposed to criticism the pinnacle of that privileged order, the prince.[39]

There was a national version of this reform impulse expressed in literary form.[40] However, this was directed primarily at reform of the *Reichsstände* (imperial estates) and avoided attacking individual states or the system of privilege. There were no organised movements to take this beyond literary expression as there were for state-oriented patriotism.[41]

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[38] See Mary Lindemann, *Patriots and Paupers: Hamburg 1712–1830* (Oxford, 1990); Franklin Kopitzsch, *Grundzüge einer Sozialgeschichte der Aufklärung in Hamburg und Altona* (2nd edn. Hamburg, 1990) and Herbert Freudenthal, *Vereine in Hamburg. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Volkskunde der Geselligkeit* (Hamburg, 1968). There is the distinctive point that in this case the form of government was that of a city-republic, not a princely state, and that the same kinds of merchants governed as organised in the Patriotic Association. Elsewhere 'patriotism' had to be more circumspect in relation to the ruler, operating more informally through bourgeois officials. Nevertheless, a similar kind of reform impulse can be observed, usually based on towns.

[39] As the conservative army officer Yorck observed of the Prussian reform movement: 'If Your Majesty (Frederick William III) deprives me and my children of our rights [in this case the noble monopoly of officer positions], on what basis do you defend your own?' Quoted in Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutche Geschichte 1800–1866* (Munich, 1983), p. 52.

[40] For example the 1766 publications of J. J. Moser, *Von Teutschland und dessen Staats-Verfassung überhaupt* and F. C. von Moser, *Von dem deutschen Nationalgeist*.

[41] Echternkamp, *Aufstieg des deutschen Nationalismus*, p. 84 quotes from Wieland (1795) on the inability to find German patriots as opposed to Saxon or Bavarian patriots.

Patriotism in this phase challenged the *status quo* in terms of state legit-
imacy and unmerited privilege, not in the name of national reorganis-
ation or regeneration.

The second phase, especially after 1800, was marked by French
military success. The Holy Roman Empire was abolished (1806) and
Napoleon reorganised the German state system, mainly at the cost of
the small temporal and Catholic states and to the benefit of the larger ter-
itorial states. The focus of reform now shifted to these states, whether the
purpose of such reform was to consolidate their position in subordination
to France or to prepare for a subsequent bid for liberation from French
domination.[42]

Many of the reforms of this period can be linked to the general
modernisation of the previous period—extension of the principle of
private ownership and competition into both the agrarian and the man-
ufacturing economies, further rationalisation of state organisation, e.g.
through the introduction of functional ministries, continued secularis-
ation of government. The crisis of military defeat and reorganisation as
well as French pressure made it easier to overcome much of the resistance
to such reforms.[43]

In addition to societal and administrative reforms, a new element was
introduced which concerned the state/society relationship. States felt
compelled to introduce constitutions and limited forms of self-
government, to save money, to inspire enthusiasm, to gain support for
reforms. There were also great extensions in obligations to perform
military service and pay taxes. The two went together. It was hoped that
extending participation would make more palatable the extension of ob-
ligations. In some cases, above all increasing revenue, consultation was
seen as essential. More generally, there was the idea that radical reforms of
this kind introduced 'from above' would help save the state from collapse
or challenges from below. However, for some opponents of such reform,
the changes would result in revolution by another route: '"Better three
more lost battles of Auerstedt [the Prussian military defeat of 1806] than
one October Edict" [the Prussian law of 1807 decreeing peasant emancip-

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[42] For a good English-language account of these changes see James Sheehan, *German History
1770–1866* (Oxford, 1989), ch. 4–6. See also now Simms, *Struggle for Mastery*, especially ch. 3.
[43] Wehler has, as a consequence, termed this 'defensive modernisation', as indicated in the
subtitle of volume 1 of his *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (see n. 22 above). See especially
pp. 363–485 for details of the reforms. Simms, *Struggle for Mastery*, prefers the term 'offensive
modernisation'.

ation] was the mentality attributed to the discontented aristocracy by one jaundiced bureaucrat.'[44]

Such reforms, focused on the individual state, contributed more to the capacity to challenge and subsequently overthrow Napoleon than did any appeal to German national feeling. Fichte could give the lectures that became the *Addresses to the German Nation* because the French took the view that a man who advocated educational and language reform was less dangerous than one who encouraged insurrection and the assassination of French troops. When the prime minister of Prussia, Baron Stein, was discovered favouring such measures, he was dismissed on Napoleon's insistence. The problem for the French was that reforms which could strengthen this state-centred resistance were also what in principle they favoured and which also increased the value of German states as allies. Whether in the form of an appeal to old state loyalty or through creating new institutions and loyalties, it was state-centred action which eventually enabled Germany to participate in its own liberation from Napoleon. For example, it was professional officers loyal to their princes who commanded the successful armies of 1813–15; the nationalist volunteers were of minor importance.[45]

However, one should not present state patriotism and German nationalism as mutually exclusive or even polarised responses. Preparing the ground for renewed war with France in 1809 the Habsburg court appealed to German sentiments and donned peasant dress in obeisance to the Herderian notion that the heart of the *Volk* was the common people.[46] The general alliance formed against Napoleon in the summer of 1813 appealed to German patriotism. However, such appeals served rather than threatened state interests. Where they posed a threat, for example when Stein (now serving the Tsar and playing a leading role in occupation

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[44] Simms, *Struggle for Mastery*, p. 81, where he also quotes the Yorck remark (see n. 39 above).
[45] We still lack a critical study of the war of liberation. Numerous studies refer vaguely to patriotic appeals (Prussian or German) to explain the massive military mobilisation which enabled Prussia to force her way back into the ranks of the great powers. The conventional nationalist view exaggerates the impact of German nationalism; 'revisionist' debunking places great emphasis upon the powers of 'tradition' and visceral hatred for the French but confronts the problem of explaining the innovative features of the mobilisation. For such revisionism see T. C. Blanning, *The French Revolution in Germany: Occupation and Resistance in the Rhineland 1792–1802* (Oxford, 1983), although that stops well short of the period of mass mobilisation for war and, more generally, Michael Hughes, *Nationalism and Society: Germany 1800–1945* (1988). Suggestive and drawing upon Prussian sources, many of which have since been destroyed, is R. Ibbeken, *Preußen 1807–1813. Staat und Volk als Idee und in Wirklichkeit* (Cologne, 1970).
[46] See W. Langsam, *The Napoleonic Wars and German Nationalism in Austria* (New York, 1930).

policy as the Allies pushed Napoleon back into France) wished to pursue a hard line against Napoleon's erstwhile German allies who had changed sides in 1813, he was quickly sidelined by Metternich who regarded those newly made alliances as crucial. Stein's idea of unleashing national energies 'from below' revealed how weak and unorganised were such energies. Yet although Metternich himself now opposed reform from above such reform had played a major role in making resistance to Napoleon effective and ensured that the 'restoration' of 1814–15 was, in fact, no such thing.[47]

The national idea did not threaten the territorial state but rather monarchical legitimacy because it associated national interest with constitutional reform. With the removal of the French threat the Congress of Vienna was concerned to suppress modern constitutionalism[48] in order to concentrate power into the hands of monarchical states. However, it could not restore the pre-Napoleonic situation, if only because the victorious German states were in many respects beneficiaries of Napoleon's work and because it was recognised that one reason for French success was the weakness of earlier arrangements. The modernised territorial state survived. However, in the hope of ensuring that the German states could combine diplomatically, militarily, and constitutionally together under Austro-Prussian leadership a German Confederation was established. In part this was also an effect of the continuing power of an 'imperial' political culture which had also informed the organisation of the *Rheinbund*, Napoleon's umbrella organisation for German states which lasted from 1806 until 1813.

The changes wrought during this phase had various consequences for many Germans. The 'state' as an impersonal and sovereign public apparatus exercising power over a distinct territory and population became much more clearly defined and perceived than before. Many

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[47] Stein's efforts as head of the central commission set up to coordinate occupation in reconquered German territory are analysed in P. Graf von Kielmannsegg, *Stein und die Zentralverwaltung 1813–14* (Stuttgart, 1964). Metternich was undermining this approach as early as October 1813 with the Treaty of Ried between Austria and Bavaria in which, in Article 4, Austria pledged to recognise the autonomy and territorial integrity of Bavaria.

[48] The Confederation was happy to introduce 'constitutions' based on regional and estate assemblies with limited consultative rights but not of a modern form which provided for state-wide, non-estate based assemblies with greater powers. See Article 13 of the *Deutsche Bundesakte* (8 June 1815) reprinted in E. R. Huber (ed.), *Dokument zur deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte. Bd. I 1803–1850* (3rd edn., Stuttgart, 1978), pp. 84–90 (88). The point was reiterated more strongly in the Vienna 'Final Act' of 1820, Article 54, ibid., pp. 98–9.

mediating institutions such as guilds, towns, noble landowners, churches, or even bourgeois figures such as tax farmers were either abolished or re-shaped as agents of the central state. At the climax of this period, in 1813–15, these states in turn became more or less willing members of a massive diplomatic and military alliance against France. States imposed uniform arrangements across their various provinces, creating a free zone within which people could move but coupled with a sharper policing of the state boundary. The state acted against local privilege in order to make better connections to the bulk of inhabitants.

In short, there was no returning to the pre-revolutionary world after Napoleon's defeat. The modernising territorial state produced by Napoleon's own reforms was preserved and confirmed but in a way which sought to repress some of the constitutional, participatory, and national dimensions of political action. Ideas associated with such action shifted into opposition which was intellectually difficult to combat as it was so closely bound up with the way the German state-system had evolved. Whereas the tensions between patriotism and absolutism in the first phase and between radical reform from above and resistance to reform had only marginally related to national ideas and movements, which consequently were politically quietist, state-supporting or an affair of marginalised intellectuals, in this third phase the national idea was closely related to the major tension between constitutionalism and anti-constitutionalism.[49]

Repression of modern constitutionalism (henceforth I will call this liberalism) was increasingly organised through the German Confeder-ation. For those seeking to realise fully the constitutional reforms made or promised during the Napoleonic era it became apparent that state reform had to be complemented by Confederal, i.e. national reform.[50] The ideal of constitutional government was linked to the idea that the Ger-man states must be unified. This was supported by cultural and historical conceptions of the German nation, reproducing the earlier ambivalence of national and enlightenment ideas in a different political context.

Only in this third phase did a genuinely national political movement develop. It drew upon the bourgeois elaborations of the national idea of

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[49] See James Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1978) and Dieter Langewiesche, *Liberalismus in Deutschland* (Frankfurt/M., 1988). This has now been published in English under the title *Liberalism in Germany* (London & Princeton, 2000).

[50] I stress this complementary relationship. Liberals were as deeply indebted to an imperial-federalist political culture as the states they opposed; the point was that reform had to be both at the state and the national level.

the two previous phases but integrated these with state-centred notions of patriotism and reform from those two phases. In part the focus on a cultural ideal of the nation can be linked to the kind of challenge posed to a movement seeking reform within a multi-state system. Unification nationalism, more than separatist or reform nationalism, must make explicit connections between politics and culture. Separatist nationalism can simply assert the existence of a nation in a portion of state territory and focus its attention on the break from the existing state. Reform nationalism can take national territory for granted and concentrate on gaining state power. Unification nationalism does not have a single state either to reject or seize but must appeal to a non-state idea which covers a plurality of states.[51]

This argument presents a major problem for Kedourie's contrast between nationalism as a type of 'ideological politics' contrasted to 'constitutional politics'. The first potent political form German nationalism took was as constitutionalism after 1815. One might rejoin that this is playing with words because 'constitutional' has two different meanings in these two different contexts. The constitutionalist ideal can become an abstract idea deployed in the style of Kedourie's 'ideological politics' or it can operate in the style of 'constitutional politics'. However, *alternative* forms of constitutionalism became the major, one might almost say routinised, lines of political conflict in restoration Germany. Liberalism (oppositional modern constitutionalism) developed as a national political programme and movement pursued in reformist manner. It is difficult to see how such a politics can be fitted into either of Kedourie's categories. More important is to understand why the idea of nationalism was so closely related to that of liberalism. That brings me back to the dialectic between ideas and actions in response to a crisis of political modernisation.

Political Ideas as Problem-solving

Political ideas are essential to the exercise of power when the conditions under which power is exercised are undergoing rapid and radical change.

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[51] I elaborate on the distinction between these three kinds of nationalism in *Nationalism and the State*. The fact that unification nationalism requires a concept of the cultural nation does not, of course, explain why unification nationalism and the deployment of such a concept come about. Nor does my argument mean that separatist or reform nationalisms cannot or do not develop strong cultural concepts of the nation.

'Constitutional' politics which works with the 'world as it is' require that there be consensus about what this world is like so that it can focus on achieving tactical gains within an agreed framework. However, the impact of France upon the German lands had destroyed such a framework, which still worked even if it had already been challenged and eroded in some ways before 1792. Ideas associated with 'constitutional' politics no longer made sense of the world 'as it had become'. To understand the 'world' and to develop an effective politics required intellectual innovation. All politics, even the politics of survival, had to take on ideological attributes. The appeal of nationalism must be linked to this political necessity. Kedourie argues that the French revolution introduced a new political style but the point applies to every kind of politics—conservative, liberal or radical, national or anti-national. The rate of modernisation had opened up such a gap between experience and expectation that appeals to tradition no longer carried conviction and one had to construct images of the future which were not forward projections of one's understandings of the past.[52]

There were three major political changes which required energetic intellectual engagement. First, there was the issue of legitimacy. Confessional mixing and wholesale changes of rulers, territories, and forms of state rule made it impossible to continue to appeal to religious or dynastic or customary justifications for authority. These had to be linked to appeals grounded upon the interests or wishes of the subjects of the state. Second, the state increasingly appeared as an impersonal and public apparatus. The concentration of power into the hands of the prince and his officials had already contributed to this process. However, restructuring state bureaucracy, introducing written constitutions, and undermining hierarchies of privilege made this more apparent. Finally, state boundaries were more tightly defined and policed after 1814 while people could move more freely within those boundaries, which raised acute questions of defining who belonged to the state and who did not.

To each of these increasingly salient aspects of the political world— aspects which could not simply be 'seen' but had to be intellectually

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[52] These ideas of a growing disjunction between past and future, experience and expectation, linked to a crisis of modernisation, have been most thoroughly worked through by Reinhard Koselleck. See his collection of essays *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt/M., 1979). This has been published in an English translation by Keith Tribe as *Futures Past: on the semantics of historical time* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985).

grasped and which were novel—there were innovative intellectual responses.

One answer to the legitimacy problem was to locate the source of sovereignty with the subjects of the state. The notion of the 'service' state was moving in that direction but it left with the prince the power to decide what did or did not serve. That could no longer suffice. The continuation of the 'service state' idea now took a bureaucratic form. One could no longer credibly present the prince as all-wise and all-knowing but bureaucracy, especially if one based on merit, qualification, and expertise, could be presented in such a way.[53] However, this hardly satisfied interests which felt excluded from influence over such a bureaucracy. That might be met by shifting the balance from the administrative to the judicial bureaucracy, ensuring the dominance of legal norms and independence over that of the executive and policy norms. The ideal of 'rule of law' or the *Rechtsstaat* expressed a trust in judges rather than ministers. An alternative approach was to make provision for a more direct expression of the will of the subjects. This could range from enforced consultation between prince and assemblies drawn from those with a 'stake' in public affairs (usually adult males with certain levels of education, wealth, and property) through to vesting sovereignty in a popularly elected assembly. Even conservative responses had to adjust to the new world and did so by presenting society as organic, thereby preparing the ground to argue for representation to be based on principles such as estate rather than wealth or numbers. What all these responses had in common was their recognition that government had to be accountable to those it served and that the forms of government were matters of human construction. Various theories of the social contract provided the grounding of such an argument. None of this was 'obvious' or 'common sense' but depended upon the formulation of novel and abstract political arguments.

Such arguments about the accountability of state to its subjects also addressed the development of the state as an impersonal and public institution. They involved making a distinction between 'society' and 'state' and then seeking to provide an appropriate connection between the two. One problem, however, was to invest notions of accountability to society

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[53] For the argument that increasingly the monarch was presented as the pinnacle of a constitutional or bureaucratic order rather than of a structure of privilege sanctified by tradition see two recent works: Marita Krauss, *Herrschaftpraxis in Bayern und Preußen im 19. Jahrhundert: ein historischer Vergleich* (Frankfurt/M. & New York, 1997) and Monika Wienfort, *Monarchie in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft. Deutschland und England von 1640 bis 1848* (Göttingen, 1993).

with a concrete and emotional force. If society is represented purely as a set of private interests and the purpose of government merely to provide security for those interests it is difficult to see how such interests can be converted into a public and collective politics that will make government act, especially when the challenge is to establish such accountability.

Civic patriotism played this role in France with the equation of the terms citizen with patriot, juxtaposed against such categories as aristocrat and traitor.[54] Whether one explains the impact of this civic patriotism in terms of the capacity of certain interests to appropriate its arguments for their own purposes or in terms of the power of its language and imagery actually to produce what is first imagined, it is essential to recognise the cognitive role of such arguments.[55] They helped make sense of issues of state legitimacy and organisation which could not easily be understood with languages which legitimised government in religious or dynastic terms, which saw the state in personal and private terms, or which confined the notion of 'service' to the self-defined obligations of the prince. However, such a language was more difficult to use in this mobilising way in the German states where ideas of civic patriotism displayed a more reformist role and were oriented to the present state-system which was non-national.

It was also more difficult to use because of the different relationship between territory and state in the French and German cases. State boundaries in *ancien regime* states possessed a porous character. Other, non-state boundaries were more important for certain purposes. Poor relief was conditional upon birth in the parish. Municipalities had legal and fiscal systems which sharply distinguished them from the surrounding countryside. Provinces within a single state imposed their own tariffs. Church and aristocratic landownership straddled state boundaries and were associated with political powers and obligations distinct from that of any single state. The lack of any clear and comprehensive definition of state membership, of effectively policed borders or of any system of mass documentation meant that boundaries were not invested with the

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[54] See the essays edited by Renée Waldinger *et al*. under the title *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship* (Westport, 1993). Of special relevance here are the essays by Pierre Rétat, 'The Evolution of the Citizen from the Ancien Régime to the Revolution' (pp. 3–16) and Michael Fitzsimmons, 'The National Assembly and the Invention of Citizenship' (pp. 29–42).

[55] Recent historiography has stressed the significance of novel forms of language in actually shaping the course of the revolution. See, for example, Keith Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution* (New York, 1990).

abundance of functions and meaning which they came to possess in the era of the nation-state. It was with the French revolution that boundaries came to take on this modern character. Indeed one of the ostensible causes for the outbreak was a conflict between the French view of the boundary as a single sharp line which demarcated political ties and the *ancien regime* view that certain types of property in 'France' could entail political ties with the Holy Roman Empire.[56]

Civic patriotism in France became linked to the creation of a uniform and sharply bounded state. The variability of sub-state boundaries was swept away with administrative reorganisation, intended to remove the forces of privilege and reaction from the regions and to instil a common system and loyalty. State membership was clearly defined for the first time with the law of descent being used to convey the sense of the citizens of France as an extended family. It also underpinned the achievement of new political rights (above all to elect one's representatives) and obligations (above all military service).

If the French revolution and subsequent wars hardened the equation of the sharply bounded state with the civic nation in France, it often had the opposite meaning beyond France. French military success was associated with constant changes in the territory and institutional forms of the state. A republican phase was followed by a monarchical one. Defeated states were deprived of territory (e.g. Prussia after 1806); states were wiped from the map (e.g. Hannover, the German states on the left bank of the Rhine); other states acquired new territory, in some cases expanding massively beyond their original core (e.g. Baden and Württemburg); totally new states were created (e.g. the Kingdom of Westphalia and the Grand Duchy of Berg). One wave of reorganisation was almost immediately followed by another. Napoleon was still experimenting with different arrangements up to the time when his energies became concentrated upon the invasion of Russia in 1812. Understandably cartographers began to focus on 'natural' boundaries for Germany rather than trying to draw maps of constantly changing states.[57]

Arguably this was nothing new; every war in eighteenth-century Europe brought its redrawing of the political map and in some cases the complete destruction of a state, such as Poland. However, such changes

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[56] See T. C. Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (1986).
[57] See, for example, Hans-Dietrich Schultz, 'Deutschlands "natürliche" Grenzen', in *Deutschlands Grenzen in der Geschichte*, edited by Alexander Demandt (Munich, 1990), pp. 33–88.

were accompanied by acceptance of existing privileges and laws. This time the dominant power insisted that the legal order of privilege be removed (abolition of guilds, peasant emancipation, disestablishment of the church etc.) and the new states, especially those closest to and most dependent upon French support, eagerly complied. State boundaries *were* more clearly demarcated and uniform arrangements introduced for the various sub-units of a state yet this was clearly artificial and fragile, liable to change with the next crisis. States were deprived of their old identities and legitimations but, unlike the territorially stable France, could not easily locate 'their' citizens upon whom could be built new ones.[58] Civic patriotism had at least to find a complementary territorial focus.[59]

Germans confronted three elements of political modernisation: legitimacy grounded on the sovereignty of the subject, dualism of public state and private society, and the state as a sharply bounded territory coupled with a sense that each particular state boundary in the German lands was fragile and arbitrary. In these circumstances the reorientation towards the world of politics of the cultural idea of the nation, an established feature of educated bourgeois culture, could exert great appeal. It provided a 'natural' basis for the striking of political judgements. Constitutionalism provided the set of rules through which popular sovereignty and state–society relationships could be understood and reformed without radical consequences. The national territory (that is, the territory of the nation) became the 'natural' as well as institutionalised space within which this constitutional project could be realised. The appeal of this national idea can be explained not just as a way of serving the interests of groups excluded from privilege and power but with its capacity to make sense of bewildering change. The national idea was sufficiently precise to be given a cultural or historical content[60] but sufficiently vague

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[58] New states certainly tried to do this, and some had a little success. See, for example, Werner Blessing, *Staat und Kirche in der Gesellschaft. Institutioneller Autorität und mentaler Wandel in Bayern während des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 1982) as well as the books by Kraus, Wienfort, and Paret already cited.

[59] I have explored some of problems associated with state boundaries and national identity in: 'Sovereignty, Citizenship and Nationality: Reflections on the Case of Germany', in *The Frontiers of Europe*, edited by Malcolm Anderson & Eberhard Bort (London & Washington, 1998), pp. 36–67. See also Andreas Fahrmeir, 'Nineteenth Century German Citizenship: A Reconsideration', *The Historical Journal* 40/3 (1997), pp. 721–52.

[60] Echternkamp, *Der Aufstieg des deutschen Nationalismus*, argues that from around 1820 there was a shift away from purely cultural to more historical representations of the national idea. One could interpret this as a way of making a more reformist connection between the pre-political and the political elements of the national idea, of taking nationalism away from Kedourie's

to accommodate open-ended and novel political demands. The national idea helped in the intellectual challenge of bridging the gap between experience and expectation.[61]

The presentation of the national idea as liberal can be criticised as internally contradictory. Some have argued that the ideals of liberalism oriented to individual liberty are incompatible with those of nationalism oriented to collective power. However, under the circumstances in which the national idea developed as a response to problems of political modernisation in the German lands, liberal and national elements were inseparably bound together. It simply does not help to oppose the constitutional politics of liberalism to the ideological politics of nationalism. What one confronts is not an essential (organising or unit) idea or a thoroughly contextualised but self-contained political discourse; instead there is an intellectual response to a crisis of political modernisation which presents the actual as well as the legitimate subject of politics as the nation and thereby establishes in a particular way the idea of politics as a distinct activity requiring popular participation within a bounded territory.

There is nothing inevitable about this intellectual response. It would be wrong to treat nationalism as a 'natural' response to such political transformations. Comparisons indicate many different ways in which intellectuals engage in a critical encounter with the political order. Benedict Anderson, for example, provides a fascinating example of how a 'professional' class in Indonesia developed a coded and a-political critique by comparing their skills favourably with those of princes, for example in the arena of sexual prowess.[62] This is hardly something which figures in pietist Lutheranism! However, the cult of sensibility in early German romanticism, even if puritanical in the field of sex, represented another way of challenging the traditional order. In another essay Anderson outlines the ways in which certain early twentieth-century Indonesian nationalists began to elaborate notions of national pride but not within a 'modern' linear temporal struc-

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'ideological' style to a more 'constitutional' style in which there is no need to ask for an abrupt jump from culture to politics but rather to see the future national movement as rooted in national history.

[61] A key aspect of this is to do with providing a mythical history which connects past, present, and future, drawing upon cultural practices of the time and adopting appealing images, symbols, and ceremonies. I allude to these qualities of the national idea later in this essay but there is not space to provide the detail which is needed to make the argument persuasive.

[62] Benedict Anderson, 'Professional Dreams', in *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia and the World* (1998), pp. 105–30.

ture, very different from the sense of time revealed in the biographies of German bourgeois writers of over a century earlier, and therefore less easy to mobilise in a modern politics which referred to an allegedly real past in order to inspire and direct action towards the future.[63] One can multiply such responses almost infinitely, including those which bypass any national ideal but instead respond to modernisation with visions of social reorganisation or religious revival. In Germany as 'modernity' itself changed character, for example with the rapid commercialisation of economic activity after 1815, so again responses altered, and yet again with the emergence of clear urban-industrial growth. Furthermore, at the detailed level there is a huge variety of responses which can be related to many different factors such as religion, social position, state affiliation, education. In this sense Kedourie's point about a whole range of contingencies both at the level of ideas and action is indisputable. But that only forces one question more and more insistently: why did the intellectual response in terms of nationalism so frequently emerge as the most significant? At the level of ideas alone it is difficult to say it is more rational or comprehensive than any other response, assuming one can establish criteria for judgement. It is difficult also to accept that it is significant because it provides a more valid account of modernisation than other responses. Rather it is because it provides a peculiarly appropriate 'map' of political modernisation, a map which both describes novel political terrain and prescribes a certain route through that terrain. And that is to do with the fact that the secular, public, territorially bounded state legitimated by popular sovereignty emerges as the central component of the modernising political order. The national idea is developed and comes to be related to the world of politics in very different ways and that of Germany has its own peculiarities yet it is but one variant on this oft-repeated story.[64]

Back to Political Action

One might try to explain the career of a 'successful' political idea in Darwinian terms. There are always more political ideas being formulated

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[63] In his analysis of the autobiography of Soetomo, one of the founders of the 'Party of the Indonesian Nation' in 1930. See Anderson, 'A Time of Darkness and a Time of Light', in *The Spectre of Comparisons*, pp. 77–104.

[64] I develop this argument at greater length in an essay 'Approaches to Nationalism' in *Mapping the Nation*, edited by Gopal Balakrishnan (London & New York, 1996), pp. 146–74.

than there is room for their growth and translation into action. Certain ideas get selected for increasing political significance and others get marginalised. It is important not to write a crudely teleological history in which, for example as Burkhardt gloomily noted in 1871, everything is seen as inevitably tending toward the glorious consummation of the foundation of the German Second Empire. But equally it is important to recognise that some ideas or combination of ideas come to matter more than others, that this is a process over time as well as a state of affairs at any particular time and that the selection depends upon a 'fit' between the idea and the actions with which it becomes associated.

First and foremost, the idea of nationalism provided this 'fit' because to many Germans it seemed to reflect changes around them. The state had to be rendered accountable to its subjects but how did one conceive of those subjects? Those subjects were the people (*Volk*). The state was distinguished from society but how did one characterise that society as a 'whole society' rather than as a set of competing factions, orders, or classes? As a *Volk*. The individual German states were fragile and arbitrary constructs emerging from the revolutionary warfare of 1792–1815. How could one provide a more stable and 'natural' underpinning to those states? By seeing these states as so many components of a cultural nation. Even conservatives did this; the Bavarian Ludwig I cultivated national memories and constructed national monuments, although this was not seen as a challenge to the existing political order.

The national idea had to be given a more specifically political relevance. In *Nationalism and the State* I argue that the idea of nationalism had three distinct political functions: coordinating diverse elites, mobilising popular support, legitimating assistance from powerful outsiders. In each case the national idea presents a vision of friend and foe. For example, the national idea enabled coordination between liberal and radical political oppositional elites in various German states in the 1830s and 1840s. Liberals were more concerned with the rule of law, constitutional limitations on monarchical power, and economic modernisation whereas radicals focused on popular sovereignty and often opposed economic innovation. However, a language presenting the case for political reform in terms of rendering the various states accountable to the nation could help these elites make common cause. At the same time, the presentation of the national case in progressive and constitutional terms made it attractive to public opinion in Britain and France where the idea of the nation-state was regarded as self-evidently virtuous. The mobilising role

became apparent in 1848 although this also revealed the limited appeal of nationalism.[65]

In considering the capacity of nationalism to perform these functions one must always bear in mind the role of *interest*. One should not expect to find a politics which coordinates elites, mobilises popular support, or legitimates external support which does not also serve independently defined interests of such elites, popular classes or outsiders. Furthermore, as the national idea acquires political force it comes to mean different things to different interests. Once radicals and liberals had the prospect of power before them in 1848 they soon became aware of what divided them and then emphasised different aspects of the national idea.

I have also argued that the nationalist idea has a peculiar appeal because of the way in which it asks people to celebrate *themselves* rather than anything beyond them.[66] Here we must pay attention to symbols, ceremonies, rituals. Under modern conditions politics becomes a distinct and public activity associated with the formation of specific institutions and practices such as parliaments, parties, and elections. Such a politics requires innovations in political language, imagery, symbolism, ceremonial. Nationalism with its focus on culture and history is especially adept in responding to these requirements. There is a constitutional as well as an ethnic element in this; the 'constitution' can become an icon just as much as a national hero. Indeed, nationalist historiography stresses constitutionalism as much as ethnicity. Magna Carta, the Rutli oath and the founding fathers of the USA figure in national myth-making as prominently as ethnic epics about Germans defeating Romans or Saxons resisting Normans.

Nevertheless, these appeals will only work if nationalism appears as an appropriate and relevant response to actual political problems and that is a matter which can only be accounted for in terms of a dialectic between political structures and ideas in which the central issues are the state as a public apparatus legitimated by the principle of popular sovereignty, ruling over a distinct, bounded territory and structured through some compact between itself as a specialised institution and its citizens as members of a 'whole society'.

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[65] For these varying forms of nationalism see Langewiesche, *Liberalism in Germany*, Echternkamp, *Aufstieg des deutschen Nationalismus*, various essays in John Breuilly (ed.), *The State of Germany: The National Idea in the Making, Unmaking and Remaking of a Modern Nation-State* (1992) and id., *The Formation of the First German Nation-State, 1800–1871* (1996).
[66] *Nationalism and the State*, ch. 2.

Proceeding in this way we can see why nationalism, as a principle of constitutionalism as much as a principle of national self-determination, became central to the way in which German politics operated. For example in 1848 it is only on the basis that the German states were held to constitute a national political system and the German people the legitimating basis of that system, that one can understand how a national parliament came into existence. Typically one encounters polarised interpretations of the work of that national parliament, one focusing on its constitutionalism, the other on its ethnic assertions.[67] Different forms of nationalism combine the two elements in different ways but one almost always finds both are present. That is because each answers to a political necessity: one identifies the 'people' and territory as the basis for the national claim, the other outlines a specific programme for the organisation of the state. The understanding of earlier German nationalism (and sometimes, by extension, of nationalism more generally) is bedevilled by the tendency to project back from that unique epoch in modern German history—the Third Reich—when the political-institutional principle was obliterated and the national programme reduced to an extreme form of the ethnic principle, namely that of race.[68]

As the national idea becomes the 'common sense' of political rhetoric so in turn it changes its character. In Germany by the 1860s early industrialisation, the increasing territorialisation of politics and military innovations made a system of many small states appear increasingly obsolete. The national idea was presented not as an ideal to be struggled for against the odds but as the inevitable form the future would take. Under these circumstances even dynastic zealots originally hostile to the national ideal felt constrained to subscribe to the ideal in order to advance their own political projects. Bismarck was the most important of such figures. The problem for those who see nationalism as a particularly extreme form of ideological politics is that such appropriations of the national idea have to be continually excluded from the category of nationalism which remains for ever the province of intellectual zealots trying to impose utopian visions upon a recalcitrant world. It makes much more sense to see what

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[67] I explore these arguments in 'Nationalbewegung und Revolution', in 1848. *Revolution in Deutschland*, edited by Christof Dipper & Ulrich Speck (Frankfurt/M., & Leipzig, 1998), pp. 314–37.

[68] I deal with this problem for the study of German nationalism generally in 'The national idea in modern German history', in *German History since 1800*, edited by Mary Fulbrook (1997), pp. 556–84.

began as a marginal political idea as one selected for success by virtue of its 'fit' with changes wrought through the crisis of political modernisation, an idea which therefore becomes increasingly mainstream and banal.

From Originality to Banality

The period from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century saw the establishment within Europe of the nation-state as the natural political unit. Nationalism ceased to be an innovative response to problems of political modernity and became rather the necessary rhetoric in which political movements aiming at control of the sharply bounded sovereign state resting on democratic legitimacy felt constrained to frame their demands. Nationalism ceased to be an interesting subject in the history of ideas once the idea ceased to express an active and opposing intellectual engagement with a bewildering world.

The 'legitimising' role of the idea increasingly came to matter, along with the differing ways it was manipulated by contending political interests. At the Versailles Peace Conference the national idea justified the dismemberment of multi-national empires and offered an alternative arrangement, although again one should note that the constitutional component mattered as much as the ethnic component in that arrangement.[69]

Again, after the Second World War and the pressure on European powers to decolonise, the national idea provided an acceptable alternative and could serve as a way of selecting successors to power. That is not to deny that there were major struggles in some territories and clearly the coordinating and mobilising capacities of nationalist movements also mattered but the story has to be put in that global context.[70] To tell the story of Kenyan nationalism, for example, as Kedourie is inclined to do, in terms of the 'ideological' politics of the Mau Mau, with oaths and dark, irrational images of friend and foe, is to privilege a marginal feature of the whole nationalist movement over the constitutionalist mainstream which had to bring about cooperation between the Kikuyu and other

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[69] The tension was symbolised in the uncertainty as to whether boundaries should be drawn according to referenda or ethnic assumptions. See Seamus Dunn & T. G. Fraser (eds.), *Europe and Ethnicity: The First World War and Contemporary Ethnic Conflict* (1996).

[70] See John Darwin, *Britain and decolonisation: the retreat from empire in the post-war world* (Basingstoke, 1988).

tribal groups and to present a credible successor to the colonial regime.[71] To the 'ideological' aspect of ethnic nationalism—political irrationality, destruction of stable politics,—one has always to add the 'constitutional' aspect—a reasonable way of accommodating to the rise of the territorial sovereign state as the principal component of the political order.

Once that order has been created and the 'nation' is a common-sense assumption, nationalism is more about the varying capacities of different political groups to appropriate the national idea to their particular needs than about a conflict between nationalists and proponents of other ideas. For example, De Gaulle and the Free French movement stood for a quite different ideal of France from Pétain and the Vichy regime. Nevertheless, both felt constrained to make the national idea the touchstone of their appeal. In doing this intellectuals around each of the two leaders acted, to use the modern term, like 'spin-doctors', selecting different elements of the national idea to pursue utterly different and opposed political goals.[72] The same type of story can be told again and again.

There remain some smaller issues of interest concerning nationalism and the history of ideas. One concerns the changing idioms of the nationalist argument as different intellectual disciplines rise and fall. Why did German nationalism shift from language to history to ethnicity to race and, accordingly from linguistics to historical studies to anthropology to biology for the key discipline to ransack? In all cases one can note a concern to juxtapose the 'natural' to the 'artificial', the 'organic' to the 'mechanical', the 'pure' to the 'polluted' but why the idioms and related intellectual disciplines alter merits investigation. In some cases, of course, the shift in idiom is associated with very important changes in political practice.

A second issue, though more a task for cultural than intellectual historians, concerns the way in which nationalism has become an everyday banality, reproduced in the coverage of political, sporting, and other events

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[71] Kedourie publishes one extract in *Nationalism in Africa and Asia* (pp. 462–71) dealing with the Mau Mau oath. Other extracts focus on terrorism, messianism, millenialism. Admittedly the extract from Tom Mboya does point to a more mainstream form of nationalism. I have tried to relate these different aspects of Kenyan nationalism together in *Nationalism and the State*, pp. 183–95.

[72] I am indebted for this example to a paper on Gaullism by Dr Matthias Wächter (Freiburg) delivered in the University of Birmingham at a French Studies/Modern History seminar in May 1999.

in the mass media, an idea so universalised as to lose any specific political content but rather to become the accepted baseline for all politics.[73]

A third issue concerns how far the erosion of key elements of the sovereign nation state will require the elaboration of post-national political ideas and how far such ideas, as with nationalism in its epoch, might be selected for increasing political significance. But that takes me beyond the subject of this essay.

Concluding Remarks

Nationalism, like all effective political ideologies, contains a principle of inclusion/exclusion and a principle of political order. The first principle establishes the 'us'/'them' distinction, one which can be changed at times of conflict into friend/foe. In other ideologies the distinction might be that of believers/non-believers or workers/capitalists. In nationalism it is nationals/aliens. Under modern conditions the nationalist distinction acquires plausibility through the erosion of 'horizontal' distinctions of privilege and its replacement by a class/occupational based system of social inequality, coupled with the growing salience of the sharply territorially bounded state which justifies itself in terms of those it rules. The development of urban-industrial culture with compulsory and mass elementary education and mass politics and communications in turn enables that nationalist distinction to achieve the status of a banality. (Except for groups which are either defined by the state or define themselves as national minorities.)

However, every effective nationalist ideology also contains a principle of political order. This may not be intrinsic to a generic definition of nationalism which is why many writers make distinctions between conservative, liberal or radical nationalism, civic and ethnic nationalism, western and eastern nationalism as well as more elaborate classifications. I have argued that in the case of Germany, for example, the nationalist idea could come to be elaborated as an aspect of bourgeois culture and could genuinely illuminate certain dilemmas arising out of modernisation. However, it only acquired a political significance when linked to conflict between restorationists and liberals after 1815 and initially took on a constitutionalist form.

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[73] A good recent study of this issue is Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (1995).

The danger of treating nationalism as a 'unit-idea' which may erupt into the world of politics is that the ever-present but variable principle of political order tends to be left aside and nationalism is treated solely in terms of the invariable principle of the nation (i.e., what figures in the 'core' definition of nationalism). This separation can leave us with Kedourie's distinction between 'ideological' and 'constitutional' politics. Nationalism, in such an account, is always irrational and probably vicious. Historians who note that this is not the case often then ignore nationalism 'proper' as simply the province for historians of extreme ideas, except in those rare and nasty cases when that extreme idea really does become politically significant. The danger of thus ignoring the intellectual history of nationalism is that one tends to understand nationalism as a simple reflection/expression of some prior reality (nation, ethnie, class interest) or one focuses on the variable principle of political order (the liberal, conservative, radical, or some other principle) and neglects the national element. The first of these options leads to apologetics or condemnation according to one's attitude towards that pre-nationalist reality. The second tends to an underestimation of the nationalist component of most modern political ideologies.

It is therefore essential to take the intellectual history of nationalism seriously, precisely because without so doing one can have only an incomplete understanding of the political significance of nationalism. The 'contextualised' approach to the history of ideas, though nowadays preferred to the 'unit-ideas' approach, actually makes links with the world of political action even more difficult to establish. The only way forward is to posit from the start a principle of connection between political ideas and political action. By treating nationalism as an intellectual response to a crisis of political modernisation, a response which helped people both understand and respond to that crisis, I have tried to outline such a principle and to relate it to the situation in which, according to Kedourie, nationalism was first invented.

There is nothing inevitable about the emergence and diffusion of the idea of nationalism and the specific forms this takes, which is why the history of ideas matters so much for an understanding of nationalism. Equally there is nothing inevitable about the particular kinds of nationalist movements which take shape and the ways in which they succeed or fail in bringing nation-states into existence, which is why the history of political structures, movements, and conflicts also require close attention. But neither history is just a matter of contingency. Studied in isolation from one another one is more likely to think that is the case than when

one seeks connections, because one will not see how political ideas are creative responses to the problems of understanding modernity and how in turn those ideas can appear appropriate and relevant within the world of politics. Nationalism has to be understood within the framework of the history of ideas; it was one of Kedourie's great achievements to make that unforgettably clear. But that history of ideas has to be constantly related to the history of politics. In that way both aspects of the history of nationalism can be better understood.

Note.   I am especially grateful to Michael Sutton for discussions about the subject of my lecture and about the work of Elie Kedourie which I found very helpful.