

**Nation and Empire: English and British National Identity in Comparative
Perspective**

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“National identification and what it is believed to imply, can change and shift in time, even in the course of quite short periods. In my judgment this is the area of national studies in which thinking and research are most urgently needed today.”

Eric Hobsbawm¹

“The history of England [is] not in England but in America and Asia.”

J. R. Seeley²

The Enigma of English Nationalism

Hegel says somewhere that it is only at the time of its dissolution that an entity reveals its principles in their true form and to their fullest extent. Nowhere is this truer than in the case of the United Kingdom. Taken vaguely for granted, unexamined and untheorized, it is only when it is faced by threats from within and without, only when there is talk of “the break-up of Britain”, that serious attention has turned to the character of the United Kingdom.

On turning in that direction, what scholars have mostly discovered is a conceptual hole. There is a good deal of constitutional history (though not much on constitutional law); there is some excellent political, social and economic history; and there is sterling work in the history of political thought, though mostly for the earlier periods. What is almost entirely lacking is any attempt to comprehend the United Kingdom as a whole, any attempt to inquire into its nature and development as a political entity. There is nothing, for instance, like Fernand Braudel's work on France, nor - perhaps understandably - anything like the outpouring of studies of German culture and the German nation provoked by public debates about Nazism and the Holocaust. Spain and Italy are also better served than Britain in this respect; while, further east in Europe, Russia has for long been the subject of searching inquiries as to its identity and destiny.³

The question is essentially one of national identity. What is Britain, and who are the British? What is their relation to England and the English - and the Scottish, the Welsh and the Irish?⁴ The question is especially acute for the English, the linchpin of the entire structure. And it is here that the lack has been greatest. As Bernard Crick has said, "every year some books of merit appear on what it is to be Scottish and Irish (dozens still on de Crevecoeur's vintage question, 'what then is this American?'), but only a handful of serious reflections on Englishness, by Englishmen".⁵ Thanks particularly to some recent historical work⁶ we have a much better hold on Britain and Britishness than previously; but England and the English remain an enigma, to themselves as much as to outsiders.

One of the reasons for the fog that surrounds this question is the persistent denial that there is such a thing as "English nationalism". *Other* nations have nationalism; the

English, it has been conventional to say, have patriotism, royalism, jingoism, imperialism - but they do not know nationalism.⁷ Hence the scholarly neglect of the subject. If a culture denies nationalism, shows a marked indifference even to questions of national identity, why should anyone spend much time in their investigation? This is perhaps why until recently there was, in the whole literature on nationalism, only one contribution that dealt squarely with English nationalism: a short article by Hans Kohn published as long ago as 1940.⁸

There *is* such a thing as English nationalism. The very denial of it speaks it. It is part of English national self-perception: the view that the English are different from other nations, one these differences lying (“thank God”) in the absence of nationalism, along with several other things that are equally agreeably a matter for self-congratulation. We have to see that this denial is of a similar character to claims of difference made on the part of many other nations. Indeed we might say that such claims form one of the main constituents of nationalism. Nationalism proclaims the unique character and destiny of each and every nation. Hence Americans think of their nation and history as “exceptional”, indeed as divinely-ordained and guided; the “peculiarities of the English” are matched by the German idea of the *sonderweg*, the peculiarities of German history and development; the French are convinced that it was their mission to bring reason and civilization to the modern world, that “the destiny of France is to be the teacher of mankind”.⁹

We cannot therefore take English agnosticism towards nationalism at its face value. Nor however should we discount it as mere *amour-propre*. It may be that we are in the presence here of different understandings of nationalism. For the English nationalism

is a very particular thing. It is an alien phenomenon, invented elsewhere and thankfully kept at bay from English shores. There is especially a long tradition, starting perhaps with Edmund Burke and passing through Lord Acton, of regarding nationalism as a kind of pathology, an all-consuming sickness of the individual and the national mind - in George Orwell's words, "power-hunger tempered by self-deception".¹⁰ So regarded, it is hardly surprising that the English congratulate themselves on being free from this alien poison - the source, as they see it, of so many of the misfortunes that have afflicted the states of continental Europe. Even those, such as Tom Nairn, who can see through the veil of self-deception on this score, are often driven to admit to some degree of peculiarity in the English case. English nationalism, says Nairn, is "*sui generis*", "a weirdly a-typical formation", a "non-national nationalism", "heteronomous" by comparison with nationalism elsewhere.¹¹

Nairn thinks that English nationalism is peculiar mainly because of the high admixture of royalism and monarchy-worship in it. This makes it in his view archaic and anachronistic, in a world that is largely republican. No doubt this does make it a difficult model to emulate or adopt, though one notes the yearning for the return of monarchy in certain decidedly nationalistic states of Eastern Europe, not to mention the continuing reverence for the emperor in Japan. But the more important point is that what Nairn is pointing to is not so much an a-typical as a different kind of nationalism. What he sees as anachronistic can better be understood as a particular variety of nationalism.

English nationalism, past and present, is the nationalism of an imperial state - one that carries the stamp of its imperial past even when the empire has gone. One might call this an "imperial nationalism", if such a conjunction does not sound self-contradictory.

Such a nationalism differs in important ways from more common varieties of nationalism, but it seems helpful, at least initially, to consider it a species of nationalism (or, if one prefers it, "proto-nationalism"). It is certainly not unique to England, or Britain. It can be found in a number of famous cases, as we shall see. Moreover, it explains certain things that are puzzling about the English case. It explains why the English do not think they have nationalism. It accounts for the kinds of nationalism they do have. And it helps us to understand the current predicament of the English, in the wake of empire: their attempt to redefine themselves as a nation, to make their nationalism more "normal", more like the nationalism of other modern nations.

Imperial and Missionary Nationalism

There is an initial and basic tension between nation and empire. Empire is typically a form of rule in which a symbolic head, the emperor, rules over a series of lands linked by dynastic connection or allegiance to the emperor. Such were - in modern times - the Habsburg, Hohenzollern, Ottoman and Romanov Empires. These were multi-national empires, spanning many lands and nations, and incorporating a wide variety of groups of different languages and different religions. Though there might be occasional attempts at "Russification" or "Germanization", the dangers of this are usually quickly realized. Typically empires make little effort at cultural or ethnic homogenization. To do so would be to strike at the heart of their very being. Though they usually have recognizably dominant ethnic groups - Germans, Russians, Turks - to identify the empire with these groups would risk bitter resentment and possibly dissolution. Ruling groups

are aware of the need to distance themselves from any one ethnicity, to appear, at least, impartial as between the various peoples that make up the empire. ¹²

Nationalism of the nineteenth century variety is, as statesmen such as the Austrian Chancellor Clemens von Metternich clearly recognized, therefore inimical to empire. Classic nationalism of this kind demands that state and nation should be one - the "nation-state". Despite the self-evident fact that that the vast majority of nation-states contain more than one nation, ¹³ the nation-state in principle dedicates itself to the goal, "one nation, one state". This does not mean necessarily the drive towards ethnic homogenization. The idea of the "political nation", as practised for instance by France, the United States and Britain, allows for a considerable degree of ethnic pluralism. ¹⁴ Quite apart from the fact, though, that it is fairly easy to identify dominant ethnic groups in most of the best-known cases of political nationhood, it is also true that its main conceptual rival, "cultural" or ethnic nationalism, has made most of the running in the area beyond western Europe and North America. Here ethnic homogenization, accompanied by "ethnic cleansing", has been the stated goal if not, in most cases, the achieved one. ¹⁵

In any case, nationalism of one sort or another has been the main solvent of modern empires. It was nationalism, aided by war, that brought down the Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman empires during and after the First World War; and it was nationalism, again aided by war, that destroyed the colonial empires of Holland, France and Britain after the Second World War. In the twentieth century, even more than in the nineteenth, no two principles have appeared more antithetical than nation and empire.

The dissolution of the Soviet empire, after 1991, into independent nation-states, has made this plainer than ever.

And yet nationalism and empire have not always been so opposed. Or rather, perhaps we should say, national identity and empire have not always stood on opposite sides. For it is possible to argue that while nationalism - especially in its ethnic form - is indeed a nineteenth-century invention, a child of the French Revolution, there has existed a sense of the nation for a much longer time. Nationalism and national identity are not, in other words, necessarily the same thing.¹⁶ By linking state so rigidly to nation, nationalism makes claims to exclusivity and, often, homogeneity that are not a necessary or indispensable part of national identification. There are other forms of national consciousness, going back to the European Middle Ages, and even to Biblical times.¹⁷ For many Europeans, Israel, as the original and exemplary Biblical nation, supplied an early model of developed nationhood - a "mirror for national self-imagining" the more powerful for frequently being invoked in times of crisis.¹⁸ It is a mistake to equate all forms of national belonging with the nineteenth century form, the form that is expressed in the ideology of nationalism.

One kind of national identity is the imperial type - the type I have called "imperial nationalism", aware of the danger that this may sound both contradictory and anachronistic.¹⁹ My point is that empires, though in principle opposed to claims of nationality, may be the carriers of a certain kind of national identity which gives to the dominant groups a special sense of themselves and their destiny. Such groups - the "state-bearing" peoples or *Staatsvölker* - will be careful not to stress their ethnic identity; rather they will stress the political, cultural or religious mission to which they have been called.

Hence another possible name for this kind of national belonging is “missionary nationalism”. Further, if one wishes to attribute it to one of the two conventional types of nationhood, political and ethnic, its opposition to ethnicity clearly puts it within the category of the political nation, especially if we remember that in several old nations, such as France, Spain and Britain, the concept of the political nation can be found well before the rise of nationalist ideology. There *were* nations before nationalism, even though their sense of themselves was expressed in very different ways from what became the norm after the rise of nationalism.²⁰

The key feature of what I am calling imperial or missionary nationalism is the attachment of a dominant or core ethnic group to a state entity that conceives itself as dedicated to some large cause or purpose, religious, cultural or political. You can get the second without the first. It is probably the case that all universal empires see themselves as engaged in some kind of “civilizing” mission, whether or not they are concerned to carry that mission beyond the boundaries of the empire. But they do not always possess, at least for the greater part of their history, a more or less distinct ethnic group that identifies itself with the mission and acts as its principal “carrier”. Different groups at different times, or a mixture of groups that identify themselves purely with the imperial cause, may take the lead in advancing the imperial mission. They may develop intense feelings of loyalty and emotional attachment to the empire. They can exhibit all the fervour of patriotism, whether expressed towards the persons of the ruling dynasty or its principles. But this is a different matter - at least it can be argued so - from the case where a single ethnic group, from the inception of the empire to its end, gets its principal

identity and sense of belonging in the world from its role as carrier of the imperial mission.²¹

The Roman Empire started as the creation of Romans, and no doubt gave them a sense of identity, though not as much as in the case of the Republic that preceded it. But they and other Italians fairly rapidly lost control of it as it expanded. By the second and third centuries, and continuing into the fourth and fifth, non-Italians were taking over the imperial administration and army, and even occupying the imperial throne itself, as with the Spaniards Trajan, Hadrian and Theodosius, the Syrians Heliogabulus and Alexander, and the Illyrians, Diocletian and Constantine (later another Illyrian, Justinian, would temporarily restore the unity of the Eastern and Western empires). The very mention of some of the most famous and most dedicated emperors shows that ethnicity has little to do with allegiance and commitment. But clearly such a situation makes it difficult for any kind of national identification to occur. People and empire remain separate entities.²²

The Ottoman Empire, to come to more modern times, exhibits some similar features. One can undoubtedly discern, as with Rome, a form of missionary nationalism, in the association between the Ottomans and Islam in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. But, as with the Romans, the identification of that mission with a particular ethnic group is problematic. Though Turks were nominally the "state-bearing" people, throughout they shared imperial rule with other peoples of the empire and in many ways actually suffered discrimination and exclusion (a not uncommon experience for imperial peoples). Until late in the seventeenth century the Ottoman army (the Janissaries) and imperial administration were almost exclusively made up of slaves, mostly of Christian origin, selected and trained up in the "slave-households" of the Sultans; later Greek

“Phanariots” occupied such central and powerful positions in the administration as to aspire to something like co-partnership with the Ottomans.²³ Of the two hundred and fifteen Grand Viziers who ran the empire over the course of its history, over two-thirds were Christian born. Posts in the army, the civil service and at court were filled, at the highest levels, by Albanians, Macedonians, Greeks, Serbs, Armenians and Arabs, as well as Turks. As late as 1876, when the first Ottoman Parliament was summoned, nearly forty per cent of the deputies were Christian.²⁴

There is even considerable ambiguity surrounding the identity of the Turks themselves, the nominally dominant group. Present-day Turks are an amalgam of Anatolian Turks - themselves of diverse origins - mixed with Muslims and indeed non-Muslims from all the other former Ottoman provinces together with Turkish-speaking peoples from the Russian Empire and the Caucasus. All of these were “Turkified”: “the appellation ‘Turk’ refers simply to assimilability under the Turkish language and Muslim religion”.²⁵ Moreover, Turks in the governing elite and among the intelligentsia regarded themselves not as Turks but as Ottomans, subjects and servants of the universal Islamic state ruled by the Ottoman Sultan.²⁶ They devoted themselves to the project of “Ottomanism”, a political and cultural ideal that was not merely multiethnic but, despite Islam’s position as the state religion, to a good extent in practice also multifaith.²⁷ All this militated against the identification of a particular ethnic group - “the Turks” - with the mission, however conceived, of the Ottoman Empire. When, in the late nineteenth century, Turks finally developed a national consciousness and sought to impose themselves on the empire, the move heralded its break-up.

The case of the Habsburg Empire is more complicated, and requires more extended treatment. Of its missionary quality, at least as seen by its ruling house and their supporters, there is no question. As Holy Roman Emperors the Habsburgs saw themselves as responsible for the welfare of all Christendom. For two centuries, in the sixteenth and seventeenth, they bore the brunt of the Turkish invasions of Europe. They saw Hungary fall to the Turks, and Vienna twice besieged by them, in 1529 and 1683; they reconquered Hungary and drove the Turks back into the Balkans. If the Frankish leader Charles Martel "saved" Europe from the Arabs in 732, the Habsburgs can truly claim to have "saved" Europe from a later and equally potent Islamic threat. "Indeed, in its struggle against the Turks, [Austria] was Europe".²⁸

At about the same time as the Habsburgs took on the Turks, they also put themselves at the head of the defence of the Catholic church against the Protestant Reformation. From their base in Spain they launched the Counter-Reformation, and for two centuries were engaged in bitter military and ideological struggles against the Protestant nations. The Turks represented a threat to Christian Europe from outside; the Protestant were in many ways an even deadlier foe, undermining from within the unity of Christendom that was the main principle of European civilization. As Holy Roman Emperors the Habsburgs saw it as their sacred duty to preserve the Christian faith and organization that they had inherited from Rome.

In the nineteenth century - and for the last time - the Habsburgs once more took the lead in attempting to protect Europe against itself. The French Revolution and its ideas threatened, they believed, to pull Europe apart, to confront it with ceaseless disorder and unrest. After the defeat of Napoleon Austria, together with Prussia and

Russia, committed itself to the "Holy Alliance", dedicated, in the spirit of the Christian religion, to keeping the peace against the forces of nationalism and revolutionism. The main architect and guiding spirit of the Alliance for nearly forty years was the Austrian Foreign Minister and Chancellor, Prince Metternich. Metternich believed passionately in the unity of Europe: "For a long time now", he wrote to Wellington in 1824, "Europe has had for me the quality of a fatherland".²⁹ He believed that Austria, a multinational, polyglot empire, offered a model of cosmopolitanism for the whole of Europe. The Alliance failed, and with it an early experiment in European union; and in the eventual failure of Austria itself would be read the loss of another ideal, the possibility - as the Czech nationalist Frantisek Palacky saw it - of establishing a federation of free and equal nationalities within the common framework of the empire. For Palacky as for other Slavs the Austrian Empire offered the securest protection against both the external threat of Russia and the internal threat of domination by the Germans and Hungarians, the most powerful groups within the empire. "If the Austrian state had not existed for ages", declared Palacky in his famous letter to the delegates of the German National Assembly in Frankfort in 1848, "we would be obliged in the interests of Europe and even of mankind to endeavour to create it as fast as possible".³⁰

Metternich was a German, from the Rhineland. But neither Metternich nor most of the other Germans in the service of the empire thought of themselves as serving the German cause. Indeed they despised and feared German nationalism, rightly fearing that its triumph, and that of nationalism generally, would mean the end of Austria's power.³¹ Nevertheless they served a cause; like Flemings and Spaniards of an earlier age, they dedicated themselves to "the Austrian idea", an ideal that through the writings of

... Franz Grillparzer and Hugo von Hofmannsthal gained in elaboration throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³² Moreover, though constituted less than a quarter of the population of the Habsburg Empire in the eighteenth century,³³ they clearly enjoyed a privileged position, especially in the wake of the "Germanizing" policies of Joseph II at the end of the eighteenth century. Increasingly they came to dominate the upper reaches of the army and the bureaucracy.³⁴ And had not the Holy Roman Empire, so closely identified with the Habsburgs that "Empire and Habsburg became almost synonymous",³⁵ throughout its existence officially been "the Holy Roman Empire of the German People", a legacy that for many Germans survived its dissolution in 1806? The case seems strong for considering the Germans the "state-bearing" people of the Habsburg Empire, and the carriers of the Austrian idea.

And yet it does not quite work. The German element in the Habsburg Empire was always numerically too small to make Germans the preponderant group. With some exceptions the Habsburg emperors were always eager to exploit the talents and energies that flowed from all their far-flung domains. Not just artists and musicians but soldiers and administrators of a variety of ethnic origins were drawn to the court at Vienna. Poles, Czechs, Croats, Slovenes, Italians, even French - such as the dashing general and Habsburg hero Prince Eugene of Savoy - were employed in running and defending the empire.³⁶ Above all and always there were the Hungarians. From the sixteenth century, when Hungary was absorbed into the Habsburg lands, Hungarians shared with Germans the principal positions of imperial rule. Their equal status was confirmed by the *Ausgleich* of 1867, when Hungary achieved parity with Austria in the very identity of the empire.³⁷ And just as with Turks in the Ottoman Empire, the increasing stridency of Hungarian as

well as German nationalism within the empire in the second half of the nineteenth century was the prelude to its extinction.³⁸ The problem for the Habsburgs, as for the Ottomans, may well have been precisely that they were unwilling or unable to identify a dominant ethnic group with the imperial cause.

The Russian Empire

The Roman, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires offer us causes without, in the last analysis, ethnic or national "carriers". In our search for a parallel with the British case the Russian Empire comes much nearer our purpose. It is as good an example of missionary nationalism as we might find.

The Russian Empire, like the Habsburg, expanded gigantically, stretching ultimately from the Baltic to the Pacific and from the Arctic to the Black Sea. At its height it was the world's largest contiguous land empire. As both a European and an Asiatic power, its ethnic make-up was more varied than that of the Habsburg Empire. On the eve of the Russian Revolution it included, for instance, nearly nineteen million Turkic-Tatar peoples, who made up more than ten per cent of the empire's population. This made them the second largest national group, followed by the Poles, whose eleven million represented nearly six per cent of the population.³⁹

The most striking difference with the Habsburg Empire in this respect was the numerical preponderance of ethnic Russians. Whereas Germans and Hungarians, the two largest groups, each represented less than a quarter of the population of the Habsburg Empire, ethnic Russians made up more than a half of the Russian Empire; if one adds, as was customary, the closely-related Ukrainians and Belorussians, the proportion increases

to two-thirds.⁴⁰ The stage seems set for a clear expression of Russian ethnic nationalism - the empire as Russia writ large.

It has indeed been common to see Russian nationalism as quintessentially ethnic - a celebration of the Russian people, the Russian language, Russian culture.⁴¹ That tendencies towards the "Russification" of the empire developed during the later nineteenth century cannot be denied, though mixed in as it was with Slavophilism and a continuing stress on autocracy its ethnic and particularistic character was distinctly muted.⁴² But for the most part what is striking about Russian nationalism is its absence - certainly if we understand nationalism in its ethnic sense. What we find instead is imperial, missionary nationalism: the nationalism of a people with more to celebrate than merely themselves.

Russians certainly ran the empire, both in its Tsarist and Soviet forms. But no more than Germans in the Habsburg empire did they run it *as* Russians, as an ethnic or national group which regarded the empire as its preserve and the means to glorify itself.⁴³ The Russians had greater causes with which to identify, larger purposes to give themselves a sense of their role and destiny. Above all in the Tsarist period was the cause of Orthodoxy. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453 Moscow declared itself the "Third Rome", and took upon itself the defence of Christendom on Europe's eastern frontier (a task that brought it partly in alliance, partly in conflict, with Austria).⁴⁴ More importantly, with the submission of all the other countries of Orthodoxy to the Ottomans, Russia remained the sole embodiment of the Orthodox faith. Its mission became that not only of the defence of Christendom against the pagan hordes but the liberation of the subject Orthodox nations from the Turkish yoke (one more bringing it into conflict with Austria

in the competition for influence among the Southern Slavs). It was that imperial aspiration that was revealed in the schism of 1654: the adoption of the ways of the Greek and Balkan churches by Nikon and the reformers was designed to make Russia the more convincing champion of all Orthodoxy - as against the Old Believers who wished to follow a more purely Muscovite and Russian way.⁴⁵

The rejection of the Old Believers was a decisive rejection also of the ethnic path. "Holy Russia ... was not an ethnic concept".⁴⁶ The expansion of the Russian Empire, the attempt to liberate the captive Orthodox churches, were seen as Orthodox, not Russian, strivings. There were many indications of the identification of Russia with Orthodoxy during the Tsarist period. Under imperial law, for instance, ethnic Russians were listed not as Russians but as Orthodox; anyone from another nationality - for instance, a Tatar - who converted to Orthodoxy was automatically considered to have become Russian (cf. "Turks" under the Ottoman Empire).⁴⁷ The Cossacks, again, were made up of many individuals of Tatar, Polish or Lithuanian origin; but as Orthodox they were considered Russians. So total was the identification of Russians with Orthodox Christianity that it was normal for Russians to refer to each other as *krestiane-khristiane* ("peasants - Christians") or *pravoslavnye* ("Orthodox") and for their rulers to address them in the same terms. "Russians" and "Orthodox" were, in other words, synonymous. "'Orthodoxy' is a definition of 'the Russians'".⁴⁸

When early in the nineteenth century Nicholas I adopted the slogan, "Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality [*narodnost*]", as the rallying cry of the Tsarist regime, he expressed perfectly the principle of missionary nationalism: the identification of a state and nation with a religious and political cause that was higher and more inclusive than

could ever be claimed for any one national group, however great and numerous. It was in such terms that the Baltic Germans, for instance, could remain throughout the empire's history "true servants of the tsar and a mainstay of the imperial system", providing more than one hundred and fifty generals for the Russian army.⁴⁹ It was in such terms that the Tsars pit themselves against the principles of German Romantic nationalism and its echoes among Russian nationalists at home. As late as 1914 - for the last time - peasant soldiers went to do battle under the banner, "For Faith, Tsar and Fatherland".⁵⁰ It was a direct echo of Nicholas's slogan; it subordinated people (*narodnost*) to state and to the wider purposes of the state. "To maintain the empire was an end in itself, the chief objective of Russian political life. This was far more important than the spread of Russian values, religion, customs, or language within the empire".⁵¹ To such a way of thinking, "dynastic nationalism" was one thing, ethnic nationalism quite another. The former expressed a central principle of empire; the victory of the latter would spell its end.⁵²

Out of the ruins of the "universalist" Ottoman Empire the Turks under Mustapha Kemal created a modern nation-state. Out of the ruins of the Romanov Empire the Bolsheviks, on the contrary, painstakingly reconstructed a universalist multi-national imperial state.⁵³ Communism continued the pattern of missionary nationalism in the Soviet empire. Once more the Russians were the largest and most influential group, taking most of the top positions in the state and economy.⁵⁴ Once more though they subordinated themselves to a greater cause: the defence and expansion of communism. As with the Tsarist empire, so with the Soviet, ethnic Russians were denied an identity as Russians in ways both practical and symbolic. While for, instance, every republic had its own communist party - the Ukrainian Communist Party, the Uzbek Communist Party, etc.

- there was no "Russian Communist Party". Similarly while every republic had its own Academy of Sciences, there was no Russian Academy of Sciences. There was no Russian KGB, no Russian MVD, no television channels or radio stations that specifically addressed Russian ethnic concerns.⁵⁵ Even the territory of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) - an anomaly among the Soviet republics in its title no less than in its position in the USSR - was amorphous, its borders blurred, its constituent parts subject to abrupt readjustment. Thus it was one day in 1954 (after, it was rumoured, a night of convivial drinking with his Ukrainian hosts) that Khrushchev saw fit casually to turn over the mainly Russian-populated Crimea from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian Republic (thus creating an irredentist pocket and a serious problem for the new Ukrainian state after 1991).⁵⁶

Soviet policy, despite internal dissension and some slowdowns, consistently favoured and actively promoted ethnicity among the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Union.⁵⁷ The counterpart however of this championing of "oppressed" national groups in the USSR was the repression of the chief oppressor, "Great Russia" and its "great-power chauvinism", as the Bolsheviks represented Russia's Tsarist past. Russian contribution - Pushkin, Tolstoy - to world culture might be celebrated; but a specifically Russian identity was steadfastly downplayed. In Russia what mattered was class (being proletarian); in the non-Russian lands what mattered was ethnicity, being non-Russian.⁵⁸ In this Russia was a fitting microcosm of the Soviet Union as a whole. Neither was a nation or a nation-state; neither had a national identity, a national culture or an official language. "The USSR was like Russia insofar as both represented pure 'socialist content' completely devoid of 'national form'".⁵⁹ Not surprisingly many Russians, particularly in

the later years of the Soviet Union, came to feel that compared to other ethnicities theirs had been slighted and ignored. The writer Vladimir Soloukhin expostulated in 1989: "Everything Russian had to be suppressed. Why did they [the Soviets] destroy ninety-two percent of our churches? Because they had to neutralise the national feelings of Russians. Why were all the towns and villages renamed? In order to weaken the national feelings of the Russians".⁶⁰

This was perhaps to protest too much. Russians did not need the cultivation of ethnic identity; that was for other, lesser, "backward" peoples who once they achieved the same degree of maturity and development as Russia would cast off their national clothing. In any case Russians manifestly ran the Soviet Union in most important respects (though of course we should not forget the Georgian Stalin or the Ukrainian Khrushchev, nor the many local non-Russian elites firmly entrenched in their republican enclaves). Thus to be non-national was not in principle an impediment to Russian pride. Quite the contrary. As the main agents of Soviet might and achievements, Russians could regard themselves as the harbingers of a new world, one for the moment restricted to a particular part of the globe but potentially encompassing the whole of humanity.⁶¹

With the loss of that world, and that vision, Russians are thrown back upon themselves. "After a thousand years of history, Russia finds itself a country without a national identity ...".⁶² Like those other peoples that had but have lost empire - in this century Turks, Austrians, Germans, French, British - they have experienced acute difficulty in establishing a sense of themselves.⁶³ This is the legacy of all examples of missionary nationalism. Who are we when the mission fails, or is aborted? If we have tied

ourselves to a star, what happens when the star drops out of the heavens? This is the question also facing the English today.

Britishness and Englishness

The English were an imperial nation in a double sense. They created a land empire, Great Britain or the United Kingdom, formed by the expansion of England from its southern position at the base of the group of islands off the north-western coast of Europe (the "East Atlantic archipelago"). And they created an overseas empire, not just once but twice: first in the western hemisphere, in North America and the Caribbean, and later in the East, in India and South-East Asia. At its height, just after the First World War, this empire covered a fifth's of the world's surface and incorporated a quarter of its population.⁶⁴

The two empires, "internal" and "external", operated in different ways. The thesis of "internal colonialism"⁶⁵ makes too much of certain formal similarities in the making of the United Kingdom and the British Empire. But in one important respect they had similar effects. They made meaningless the development of a specifically English national identity. As with Germans in the Habsburg empire and Russians in the Russian empire, the English identified themselves with larger entities and larger causes in which they found their role and purpose.

In the first place, up until about the end of the nineteenth century, "Britishness" trumped "Englishness".⁶⁶ Especially after the parliamentary union with Scotland in 1707, sustained efforts were made both by the government and by writers and poets to establish

a British identity suitable to the new political entity. The inhabitants of the kingdom were urged to think of themselves as *Britons*, not as English, Welsh or Scots (the Irish always remained a separate matter). Although particular ethnic identities did not disappear, these efforts appear to have met with a considerable degree of success.⁶⁷

The establishment of the larger identity was made all the easier for the fact that it could be tied to a religious cause. With the Protestant Reformation, first the English then the British identified themselves with the struggle to keep alive the Protestant faith, and to oppose the forces of the Counter-Reformation. Britain was “the Protestant nation”, the English and the British “God’s elect”. They met and defeated the champions of the Catholic cause, first Spain and then France. Taking these countries as the emblems of Catholic nationhood, the British were able by contrast with them to delineate the main features of British nationhood. As against the autocracy and “despotism” of the Catholic monarchies, leading in the one case to decay and ruin, in the other to bloody and fanatical revolution, the British saw themselves as the people of parliamentary government and peaceful progress (“the Whig interpretation of history”).

The English, as the wealthiest, most numerous and most powerful group within the United Kingdom were aware of the need to restrain their claims and to mute assertions of ethnic identity, among themselves no less than among other ethnicities in the kingdom. Though there might be outbreaks of popular feeling - often orchestrated - against the Scots or Irish, the ruling authorities took care to build up loyalty not to a people but to its institutions. Britain and the British came to be identified with the Crown, with Parliament, with the Protestant religion and with the worldwide British Empire. All

groups in the kingdom were invited to share in this achievement and, where relevant, its spoils; to a good extent, all did.⁶⁸

Again, no more than in the case of the Austrian Germans or the Russians is this strategy to be equated with undue modesty or altruistic self-restraint on the part of the English. If you are clearly in charge, you do not need to beat the drum or blow the bugle too loudly. To do so in fact would be to threaten the very basis of that commanding position, by reminding other groups of their inferiority and perhaps provoking them to do something about it. It is a moot point as to whether there was any such thing as English nationalism before the nineteenth century; but even if there were, it would have been in the highest degree dangerous to make too much of it.

Protestantism and the first British Empire supplied the main ingredients of identity for the British until the end of the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, the Protestant card could no longer be played with any real conviction. For one thing there was now an intensely Catholic country, Ireland, that since 1801 had been annexed to the United Kingdom. Irish susceptibilities counted for something, if not as much as they might have wished. Moreover internationally the traditional Catholic enemy, France, gave way to new challengers in the political and economic sphere: Germany, the United States, Japan. None of these could be identified with anti-Protestantism. Finally there was the general European tendency to secularization in the nineteenth century, which further undermined the conviction of the idea of "the Protestant nation".⁶⁹

But there were now other elements to supply the deficiency in the constituents of Britishness. There was the British Industrial Revolution - a genuinely British, not English, accomplishment, in which all parts of the kingdom participated and in which all shared

the consequences, good and bad.⁷⁰ With the Industrial Revolution Britain launched upon the world a new civilization; once more there was a great cause with which the English, along with the other ethnic groups, could identify. Britain was the world's first industrial society; and whether or not that was a cause for congratulation or lament, it clearly entailed a form of belonging that was very different from national belonging.

Industrialism might, as Gellner argued⁷¹, give rise to nationalism; but as an economy, a culture, and a way of life it always transcends it.

For the British this was the clearer from the fact that their industrialization took place within the context of empire - not just the "internal" empire of the United Kingdom, but also the "second" overseas empire, bigger by far than the first, that the British constructed in the nineteenth century. Here too was another cause with which to identify, another cause that lessened the appeal of ethnic nationalism in favour of imperial or missionary nationalism. The British - as did other European peoples with overseas empires, such as the French and Germans - could now see themselves as the standard bearer's of modernity and progress, the carriers of civilization to the "lesser breeds without the law". They took up the "white man's burden". In this missionary endeavour, as both Kipling and Conrad expressed it in different ways, the British had a unique role to play, different from that of other European nations. The particularity of the "Anglo-Saxon heritage", the long legacy of free institutions and parliamentary government, enabled them to establish a different pattern of imperial rule from that of their European neighbours. If the "backward" peoples of the East were to be taught the rule of law and respect for the individual, the British were uniquely equipped to fulfil the task.⁷²

The British Empire, therefore, once more contained English nationalism and gave the English an alternative focus of identity in the imperial mission. Moreover as with the Industrial Revolution, all groups in the United Kingdom shared in the enterprise, the Scots and the Irish to a disproportionate extent.⁷³ If, nevertheless, one can date the growth of English nationalism from this period - the late nineteenth century - and if, moreover, the same is true of Scottish and Irish and Welsh nationalism, there are clearly other forces at work that to some extent pulled against the imperial identification or, to put the matter differently, began to give the imperial mission a more purely ethnic cast.

There are probably a number of factors involved in this, but one important one seems to be the culmination of nationalism in the late nineteenth century. By this time it began to be obvious that, despite the existence of large multinational empires both in Europe and overseas, the coming world was a world of nation states.⁷⁴ While this did not necessarily mean that every nation *would* be a state - power politics still determined, as of old, the outcome of this aspiration - what it seems to mean is that every nation began to feel the need to define itself as an *ethnie*, as a self-sufficient, organic entity with its own principles of development, its own "soul".⁷⁵ Not to have one's own "history" or collective memory, one's own purified "national" language, one's own national literature, expressing the values and aspirations of one's group at their best and highest - not to have these things was not to be a people in the true sense of the word.

It is this that seems to explain the "moment of Englishness" at the end of the nineteenth century: the cultivation of a distinct English historiography, the clarification and codification of the English language, the elaboration and canonization of the "great tradition" of English literature, the celebration of a particular type of landscape as

quintessentially English.⁷⁶ It is important to note that this remains at the level of cultural nationalism: the idea of political separation of the English would of course have made no sense in the context of the United Kingdom and the British Empire, which the English on the contrary could now readily interpret in specifically English terms as their creations, the achievement of a vigorous Anglo-Saxon, Teutonic people.⁷⁷ Thus at the very height of empire the impact of nationalist ideology could create something of a counter-image in the idea of Englishness, the particular character and destiny of the English people.⁷⁸

There were many reasons why, in the twentieth century, this idea remained relatively muted, why it remained cultural rather than political. There was the persistence of empire until the second half of the century. There were two world wars in which all the nations of the United Kingdom, the Empire, and the Commonwealth fought side by side, and in which any insistence on English nationalism would have been as dangerous as it would have been distasteful. There was the rise of a large and powerful Labour movement which linked all the parts of the kingdom, and in which Scots and Welsh were as prominent if not more so than their English counterparts. All these militated against the further development of English national consciousness, and they played no little part, either, in the dampening of Scottish and Welsh nationalism (the Irish question having been partly solved by the creation of the Irish Free State in 1921).

All this was to change in the second half of the century. Now empire had gone, and also industrial supremacy. The European Union beckoned and, after much hesitation, Britain took the plunge. Internally there was a realignment of politics such that the Conservative Party, which dominated the post-1950 period, became almost "the English party", leaving the "Celtic fringes" to be occupied by Labour. The two main parties, that

is, confronted each other virtually across a national divide. There was also a wave of inward migration from the countries of the old Empire and Commonwealth, creating new pockets of people with different skin colour, and often different languages, religions, and customs as well.⁷⁹

The result of all this has been a profound undermining of the unity of the United Kingdom. The Scots, especially with the discovery of North Sea oil, have felt that it might be advantageous to them to break away altogether and join the European Union on their own, unfettered, terms. The Welsh claim at least their own assembly. Northern Ireland remains tragically divided between Catholics and Protestants, the latter being perhaps the most, and also perhaps the last, British people. But here too there is a distinct sense that the mainland British might prefer to wash their hands of the whole imbroglio and allow Ulster to be absorbed in a united Ireland, leaving the Protestants to their (merited?) fate, or the option of crossing the water back to the mainland.⁸⁰

And the English themselves? Bereft of empire, no longer a global economic or political power, confronted by secessionist movements without and by "alien" cultures within - the English seem to have found it best to turn in on themselves. Never having had an identity as an ethnic group, never having needed one, they are now - like the Russians - in the process of inventing one. In doing so they have thrown up, perhaps for the first time in their history, a nationalist movement.⁸¹ The most crucial development here is probably the way in which the Conservative Party, formerly the party of Crown, Empire and United Kingdom, has turned towards a species of populist nationalism. Under Margaret Thatcher and John Major especially, the Conservative Party has been beating the English drum, defying Scots nationalists, Europeanists, and multi-culturalists.

“England for the English” seems to be their watchword - and it has found a considerable response among the white English population.⁸² Let the Scots, Irish and Welsh go their own way - as Mikhail Gorbachev memorably said of the East European nations previously under Soviet control - and leave England to work out its own destiny by itself.

Time alone will tell if such a tendency has a future. There are many things working against it (though “globalization “ is not one of them)⁸³. At any rate though one thing is clear. The English are for the first time having to confront seriously the question faced previously by many nations: who are we? The imperial and missionary nationalism that for so long gave not just an adequate but a powerful and persuasive answer is no more. The English will become nationalists, like everyone else - but in a world in which, compared with the nineteenth century world in which it had its flowering, nationalism has totally changed its meaning.

NOTES

¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 11.

² J. R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (1883; Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1971), 13.

³ For France, see Fernand Braudel, *The Identity of France*, two volumes, translated by Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), Pierre Nora, *The Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994). On Germany, see Harold James, *A German Identity, 1770-1990*, second edition (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), and Norbert Elias, *The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, translated by Eric Dunning and Stephen Mennell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); for the debates, especially among historians (the *Historikerstreit*), on the Holocaust and German national identity, see Geoff Eley, *From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), Geoff Eley, "Nazism, Politics and the Image of the Past: Thoughts on the West German *Historikerstreit*", *Past and Present* 121 (1988): 171-208; Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*, new edition (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1997); Mary Fulbrook, *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999). For Spain, see Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), John A. Crow, *Spain: The Root and the Flower. An Interpretation of Spain and the Spanish People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), J. Hooper, *The Spaniards: A Portrait of the New Spain* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987); for Italy, see Giulio Bollati, *L'Italiano: il carattere nazionale come storia e come invenzione*, second edition (Turin: Einaudi, 1984); Silvio Lanaro, *L'Italia Nuovo:*

identità e sviluppo 1861-1988 (Turin: Loesher Feltrinelli, 1988), Carlo Pirovano (ed.), *Modern Italy: Images and History of a National Identity*, 4 volumes (Milan: Editrice Electa, 1982-94); Roger Absalom, *Italy since 1800: A Nation in the Balance?* (London and New York: Longman, 1995); Nicholas Doumanis, *Italy* (London: Edward Arnold, 1999). For Russia see, Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths* (New York: Random House, 1969), Tibor Szamuely, *The Russian Tradition* (London: Fontana, 1988), Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Historical Consciousness and National Identity: Some Considerations on the History of Russian Nationalism* (New Orleans: Graduate School of Tulane University, 1991), Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, translated by R. M. French (Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Press, [1947]1992), Iver B. Neumann, *Russia and the Idea of Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia: People and Empire 1552-1917* (London: Fontana, 1998). This is of course, in every case, only the tip of a very large iceberg. For more extended references to particular cases (though significantly excluding Russia), see the contributions to Mikulas Teich and Roy Porter (eds.) *The National Question in Europe in Historical Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁴ A brief glossary might be helpful here. "Britain" - properly "Great Britain" - is the political entity formed by the union of the English and Scottish crowns (1603) and parliaments (1707); it followed upon the earlier annexation of Wales by England (1536). It became the "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland" by the union with Ireland in 1801; and the "United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" on the formation of the Irish Free State (later Eire, later the Republic of Ireland) in 1921. Strictly speaking

therefore "Britain" and "British" exclude the Irish of Ulster (Northern Ireland), though that has not stopped both British and Northern Irish from using the terms as if they included both groups. This is of course an irritation to the Republic of Ireland, as is the designation "the British Isles" to include the whole of Ireland along with Britain.

⁵Bernard Crick, "The English and the British", in Bernard Crick, editor, *National Identities: The Constitution of the United Kingdom* (Oxford UK and Cambridge MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 92; cf. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 11. For examples of recent work on Scottish national identity, see David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London and New York, 1992); Lindsay Paterson, *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994); T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A History, 1700-2000* (New York: Viking, 1999); on Ireland, see D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, third edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Richard Kearney, *Postnationalist Ireland: Politics, Culture, Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997). A rare example of work on Englishness is Robert Colls and Philip Dodd, editors, *Englishness: Politics and Culture, 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986). The three volumes edited by Raphael Samuel, *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity* (London: Routledge, 1989), contain much of value on England but like much other work of this kind suffer from a fatal ambiguity as to whether the object of analysis is England or Britain as a whole. A clearer focus is evident in Samuel's posthumously published essays, *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain* (London

and New York: Verso, 1999), especially Part One. See on this question Krishan Kumar, “‘Englishness’ and English National Identity”, in David Morley and Kevin Robins, editors, *British Cultural Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2000).

⁶ See for instance Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975); J. G. A. Pocock, “British History: A Plea for a New Subject”, *Journal of Modern History* 47 (4) (1975): 601-28; J. G. A. Pocock, “The Limits and Divisions of British History: In Search of an Unknown Subject”, *American Historical Review* 87 (2) (1982): 311-36; Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 1981); Richard S. Tompson, *The Atlantic Archipelago: A Political History of the British Isles* (Lewiston, NY and Queenston, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986); Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles: A History of Four Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1994); Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer, editors, *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Keith Robbins, *Great Britain: Identities, Institutions and the Idea of Britishness* (London and New York: Longman, 1998); Norman Davies, *The Isles: A History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁷ See the statements quoted in Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), xviii; and see also Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5.

⁸ Hans Kohn, "The Genesis and Character of English Nationalism", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1 (1940): 69-94.

⁹ Louis Dumont, *German Ideology: From France to Germany and Back* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 200. For discussions of the other forms of national "uniqueness" mentioned, see Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America", *Daedalus* 96 (1967): 1-21; E.P. Thompson, "The Peculiarities of the English", in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London: The Merlin Press, 1978), 35-91; David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

¹⁰ George Orwell, "Notes on Nationalism" [1945], in Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, editors, *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, four volumes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970), volume three, 412. For English antipathy to nationalism, see especially Lord Acton, "Nationality" [1862], in Gertrude Himmelfarb, editor, *Essays on Freedom and Power [by Lord Acton]* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1956), 141-70. The tradition is powerfully expressed in the influential little book by the British political theorist Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, fourth edition (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, [1960] 1993).

¹¹ Tom Nairn, *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and Its Monarchy*, second edition (New York: Vintage, 1994), 102, 232-3, 335; see also Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, 291-305.

¹² For the general characterization of state and nation in pre-industrial empires, see Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 8-18; Ernest Gellner, "The Coming of Nationalism and Its Interpretation: The Myths of National Class", in

Gopal Balakrishnan, editor, *Mapping the Nation* (London and New York: Verso, 1996), 99-105; John H. Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 72-75. On empire in general see George Lichtheim, *Imperialism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971); Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1986), especially Part One; Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500-c.1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995); see also Alexander J. Motyl, "Thinking About Empire", in Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen, editors, *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building. The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1997), 19-29; Motyl, *Revolutions, Nations, Empires: Conceptual Limits and Theoretical Possibilities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), Part Three.

It has been pointed out - by all three anonymous reviewers of this article - that there were indeed times when empires attempted to impose a single definition of nationality on the public (if not the private) lives of their subject peoples. It has even been suggested that in some cases, as that of China, there was a consistent policy throughout the empire's existence of fostering the myth of ethnic unity. This may well be so; it is certainly the case that in many empires dominant ethnic groups for various reasons at various times attempted nationalist policies (see further on this note 38, below). My argument is firstly that, at least in the case of the mainly European empires discussed, when they did so it was usually at a time of (perceived) crisis and out of desperation, and that nationalist expedients were frequently the prelude to (if not the cause of) imperial

dissolution. Secondly I argue that as a matter of general principle, for the kinds of reasons advanced by Ernest Gellner among others, the consistent imposition of nationalist policies would have been disastrous for the efficient functioning and long-term existence of these modern European empires. Whether the same principle applies to all empires I cannot say.

¹³ In the sense, that is, of being ethnically heterogeneous. "Multinational" might more strictly be reserved for those states - such as the United Kingdom, Spain or Canada - where groups claim or aspire to separate nationhood despite being contained within the same state formation. This does not apply to such cases as the United States or Germany despite their ethnic heterogeneity. I owe this suggestion to Rogers Brubaker and am happy to accept what is clearly an important typological distinction. It is equally clear, however, that depending on historical circumstances groups can move fairly readily from asserting merely ethnic distinctiveness to claiming full-blooded national identity (and perhaps back again). This seems the case, for instance, with the Walloons of Belgium and, arguably, the Welsh and the Cornish in Britain. On ethnic groups as "potential nations", see Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 103.

¹⁴ See for instance Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, translated by Robert B. Kimbar (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1907] 1970); Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*

(Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1992); Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (London: Vintage, 1994).

¹⁵ See Istvan Hont, “‘The Permanent Crisis of Mankind’: Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State”, *Political Studies* 42 (1994): 172-3.

¹⁶ Cf. John Keane, “Nations, Nationalism and European Citizens”, in Sukumar Periwal, editor, *Notions of Nationalism* (Budapest: Central European Press, 1995), 191.

¹⁷ Anthony D. Smith, “The Problem of National Identity: Ancient, Medieval and Modern?”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17 (3) (1994): 375-99; Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Oxford UK and Malden MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 41-52.

¹⁸ Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*, 18.

¹⁹ Strictly speaking I should perhaps write “proto-nationalism” here and elsewhere when I discuss imperial or missionary “nationalism”. But, apart from the cumbersomeness of the term, I hope the context of use makes plain enough the type of collective identity to which I refer in those cases. It includes commitment, and pride, and a sense of belonging to a particular group endowed with a particular calling in the world. So much it shares with classic nationalism. The difference is that it does not see the nation-state as the exclusive framework for its existence; quite the contrary, its *raison d'être* is found in its role as the leader of a supranational entity with a potentially global reach.

“Can one”, queried a reviewer of this article, “speak of nationalism when there is no corresponding conception of nationhood?” It is a good question. Of course one might object to the use in my discussion of the term “nationalism” at all. I agree that the concept of “missionary” or “imperial” nationalism is controversial and contestable. But I think

there is enough affinity between the cases of imperial nationalism I discuss - remembering that it does not apply to *all* cases of empire - and the general phenomenon of nationalism to make the comparison meaningful and instructive. Nationalism, as many have pointed out, is not one but many things - see, for instance, Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), 5-6; and, on the "kaleidoscopic" forms of nationalism, John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, editors, *Nationalism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 3. "Missionary" or "imperial" nationalism is just another potential addition to the family of meanings - to be judged, as always, by its potential fruitfulness for inquiry rather than by strict correspondence with some supposedly pure type. If there can be "nations before (or without) nationalism", perhaps there can also be "nationalism before (or without) nationhood".

²⁰ See, e.g., John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*.

²¹ One way of expressing this distinction - following a suggestion by one of the reviewers of this article - might be to say that in all empires the carrier groups evince "status closure", in a Weberian sense, but that only in some cases does this closure express itself in ethnic terms. The nineteenth-century Habsburg officer corps, for instance, displayed status closure - based mainly on military background and traditions of service to the monarchy - to a very high degree but it was at the same time "multitongued, multiconfessional, [and] supranational.", open to the educated strata of the monarchy's

myriad nationalities. See István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), ix, 8, and *passim*. This distinction is useful, as long as one remembers that the dominant status groups in empires, even when they clearly reflect ethnic factors, are always careful to avoid a stress on ethnicity and are even prepared, on their own terms, to admit other ethnic groups to their circle. Such was the case of the English upper class in relation to the Scottish and Irish gentry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, though the preeminence of the English "style of life" was evident. See Colley, *Britons*, 155-193.

²² This is of course a very bald statement of a complex issue. But it seems to me to express the essential relation between the Roman state and the various peoples (including the Romans themselves) whom it came to rule in the course of many centuries of expansion. Being "Roman" in the late Republic and the Empire did not refer to one's ethnicity, nation or linguistic group but to common citizenship in a political entity. "Romanization" - even in the Italian regions outside Rome - was not a process of cultural assimilation but the extension of citizenship to former clients and allies. The material culture of Rome - urban architecture, baths, roads, stadiums and public monuments - was certainly diffused throughout the empire but it was generally incorporated within a local context that retained its ethnic or cultural distinctiveness. See on this the studies in Ray Laurence and Joanne Berry, editors, *Cultural Identity in the Roman Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); and cf. S. E. Finer on the Roman Empire as "an early form of 'consocial' state": Rome "created and sustained a ruling stratum throughout the

empire which took no account of race, nation, language, colour, religion, or culture, but looked only to wealth and local influence." *The History of Government From the Earliest Times*, Volume I: *Ancient Monarchies and Empires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 602. The Roman case is of course the outstanding - one might even say, the defining - example of "civic" as opposed to "ethnic" nationhood, to use later terminology; though it remains a moot point whether any such terminology is justified before the era of nationalism.

²³ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, volume three: *The Growth of Civilizations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 22-50; *A Study of History*, volume two: *The Genesis of Civilisations*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 222-28.

²⁴ Caglar Keyder, "The Ottoman Empire", in Barkey and von Hagen, editors, *After Empire*, 35. S. E. Finer comments that, during its classic period, "the Ruling Institution [of the Empire] was, in fact, a corps of alien slaves." *The History of Government from the Earliest Times, Volume III: Empires, Monarchies, and the Modern State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1170; and generally, 1162-1184.

²⁵ Keyder, "The Ottoman Empire", 36; Toynbee, *A Study of History*, volume two, 229.

²⁶ Indeed for the ruling Ottoman elite being "Turkish" meant being rural, backward, and boorish, like the Anatolian tribesmen: "the term 'Turk' was used in a pejorative sense because it meant being tribal". Serif Mardin, "Power, Civil Society and Culture in the Ottoman Empire", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 11 (3) (1969): 271.

²⁷ See Aron Rodrigue, "Difference and Tolerance in the Ottoman Empire", *Stanford Humanities Review* 5 (1) (1995) : 25-38. "Ottomanism" in this context refers not so much

to the promotion of the religion of Islam - though that was the principal goal of empire throughout - as to the elaboration of a political system that tolerated other faiths. In this sense, as a social and cultural ideal, it too can be regarded as a form of missionary nationalism, though obviously of a different kind from that associated with militant Islam.

²⁸ Adam Wandruszka, *The House of Habsburg: Six Hundred Years of a European Dynasty*, translated by Catherine and Hans Epstein (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1962), xix; see also Wolf von Schierbrand, *Austria-Hungary: The Polyglot Empire* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1917), 32-3; Toynbee, *A Study of History*, volume two, 177-90.

²⁹ Hans Kohn, *The Habsburg Empire, 1804-1918: Text and Documents* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1961), 116.

³⁰ Paula Sutter Fichtner, *The Habsburg Empire: From Dynasticism to Multinationalism. Text and Documents* (Malabar, Florida: Krieger, 1997), 139; see also Acton, "Nationality", 168; Edward Timms, "National Memory and the 'Austrian Idea' from Metternich to Waldheim", *The Modern Language Review* 86 (4) (1991): 901; Wandruszka, *The House of Habsburg*, xvi, 183.

³¹ Joachim Whaley, "Austria, 'Germany', and the Dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire", in Ritchie Robertson and Edward Timms, editors, *The Habsburg Legacy: National Identity in Historical Perspective* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), 9; Ernst Bruckmüller, "The National Identity of the Austrians", in Mikulas Teich and Roy Porter, editors, *The National Question in Europe in Historical Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 216.

³² Timms, "National Memory and the 'Austrian Idea' from Metternich to Waldheim"; Jacques Le Rider, "Hugo von Hofmannsthal and the Austrian Idea of Central Europe", in Robertson and Timms, *The Habsburg Legacy*, 121-135.

³³ Kohn, *The Habsburg Empire*, 141; Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 13.

³⁴ Bruckmüller, "The National Identity of the Austrians", 219; Solomon Wank, "The Habsburg Empire", in Barkey and von Hagen, editors, *After Empire*, 51; Alexander Motyl, "From Imperial Decay to Imperial Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Empire in Comparative Perspective", in Richard L. Rudolph and David F. Good, editors, *Nationalism and Empire: The Habsburg Empire and the Soviet Union* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 34. It is a reflection, nevertheless, of the generally non-ethnic nature of the Habsburg officer corps that officers, of whom Germans ("ethnic" or Austrian) formed the majority and who nearly all used German as the "language of convenience", were expected to learn the languages of the mostly non-German men they commanded: Deak, *Beyond Nationalism*, 5, 83-93, 183-89.

³⁵ Kohn, *The Habsburg Empire*, 10.

³⁶ Robert A. Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1526-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 64-7; Fichtner, *The Habsburg Empire*, 17. On the multiethnic make-up of the Habsburg officer corps, see Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 178-185. Deák points out that of all the ethnic groups in the Habsburg Empire the Jews probably had most reason to be grateful to the multiethnic policies of the Habsburgs, and to the widespread practice of tolerance that came from the very top. "Consequently [the Jews] became the preeminent *Staatsvolk*, the group most likely to be loyal to the dynasty and the

Austrian *staatsidee*". István Deák, "The Habsburg Empire", in Barkey and von Hagen, editors, *After Empire*, 137.

³⁷ Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire*, 333. In career terms in the army, Hungarians actually did better than Germans after 1867: Deák, *Beyond Nationalism*, 186-7.

³⁸ Oscar Jaszi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, [1929] 1961); R. J.W. Evans, "Austrian Identity in Hungarian Perspective: The Nineteenth Century", in Robertson and Timms, editors, *The Habsburg Legacy*, 27-36. Not just the Turks, Austrians and Hungarians but the Germans (of the Hohenzollern empire) displayed strong nationalist tendencies in the late nineteenth century. This was clearly the moment when empire and nation came into greatest tension - as was also true of the English in the British empire and the Russians in the Romanov empire. But in the latter two cases - unlike the former? - it was not the nationalism of the state-bearing peoples that brought down the empire.

³⁹ J. D. White, *The Russian Revolution 1917-21* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), 4.

⁴⁰ Kann, *A History of the Habsburg Empire*, 607; White, *The Russian Revolution*, 4.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 191-274; Dumont, *German Ideology*, 10-14.

⁴² Marc Raeff, "Patterns of Russian Imperial Policy Toward the Nationalities", in Edward Allworth, editor, *Soviet Nationality Problems* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1971), 39; S. Frederick Starr, "Tsarist Government: The Imperial Dimension", in Jeremy R. Azrael, editor, *Soviet Nationality Policies and Practices* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1978), 22; Mark von Hagen, "The Russian Empire", in Barkey and von Hagen, editors, *After Empire*, 63; Hosking, *Russia*, 367-76.

⁴³ See Raeff, "Patterns of Russian Imperial Policy Toward the Nationalities", 22-42; John Barber, "Russia: A Crisis of Post-Imperial Visibility", *Political Studies* 42 (1994): 35; John B. Dunlop, "Russia: in search of an identity?", in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, editors, *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 30. Mark R. Beissinger has suggestively explored some of the problems facing Russia today as the result of an imperial experience, stemming from both the Tsarist and Soviet periods, which persistently confused Russian and non-Russian lands and peoples. The Tsarist and Soviet systems, he argues, conflated elements of both "empire" and "state", and so created ambiguous identities among elites, as both imperialists and state-builders, and among the people, as both subjects and citizens. "The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire", *Post-Soviet Affairs* 11 (2) (1995): 149-184.

⁴⁴ The doctrine of "Moscow the Third Rome" could be both universalistic, referring to Russia's mission as the saviour of all Christendom and Russia as the last universal Christian empire before the culminating events portrayed in the Apocalypse; and it could also be particularistic, referring to Russia's unique and native tradition of Christianity which it must pursue when other churches, such as the Roman and Greek, had become corrupted or enslaved. The Old Believers put the stress on the second interpretation; the Orthodox Church, after the reforms of Nikon, on the first. See Dimitri Stremoukhoff, "Moscow the Third Rome: Sources of the Doctrine", in Michael Cherniavsky, editor, *The Structure of Russian History: Interpretive Essays* (New York: Random House, 1970), 108-25; Michael Cherniavsky, "The Old Believers and the New Religion", in

Cherniavsky, editor, *The Structure of Russian History*, 146-48; Marc Raeff, "The People, the Intelligentsia and Russian Political Culture", in Alexandras Shtromas, editor, *The End of "Isms"? Reflections on the Fate of Ideological Politics After Communism's Collapse* (Oxford UK and Cambridge MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 145; Hosking, *Russia*, 64-74.

⁴⁵ Cherniavsky, "The Old Believers and the New Religion"; Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, 28-32; Raeff, "The People, the Intelligentsia and Russian Political Culture", 145; Hosking, *Russia*, 64-6.

⁴⁶ Sergei Averintsev, "The Idea of Holy Russia", in Paul Dukes, editor, *Russia and Europe* (London: Collins and Brown, 1991), 20.

⁴⁷ Jeffrey Brooks gives many examples of popular nineteenth century Russian stories in which the central event is the conversion of some pagan - Muslim prince, Polish count - to the true way of Orthodoxy and hence reception into the body of Russians. What the stories reveal is "the fusion of the tsar and Orthodoxy into one symbol of Russianness". Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read : Literacy and Popular Culture 1861-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 218; and generally 214-45.

⁴⁸ Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, 26; see also Michael Cherniavsky, "Holy Russia", in *Tsar and People*, 113, 120, 123; Gregory Guroff and Alexander Guroff, "The Paradox of Russian National Identity", in Roman Szporluk, editor, *National Identity and Ethnicity in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 82; Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism", in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, editors, *Becoming*

National: A Reader (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 211-12; Hosking, *Russia*, 210-11.

A similar suppression of ethnicity can be seen in the Byzantine Empire. The Byzantines never called themselves Byzantine or Greek or even Hellenes, the usual name by which the Greeks designated themselves in antiquity and again in modern times. The inhabitants of the Empire called themselves "Romans" (or *Rhomaioi* in medieval Greek), thus both indicating the continuity of their state with the earlier form of the Roman Empire and also their identity as members of a universal Christian Empire founded by Constantine. See Averintsev, "The Idea of Holy Russia", 13.

⁴⁹ Riasanonsky, *Historical Consciousness and National Identity*, 10; see also Raeff, "Patterns of Russian Imperial Policy Toward the Nationalities", 35; Hosking, *Russia*, 146-7, 160-1. Frederick Starr stresses "the relative openness" of the Russian elite to the subject peoples of the Russian Empire: "One will not find among the aristocracy of any other European state so many great families tracing their ancestry to the subject areas: Suvorov, Bargration, Loris-Melikov, Charkasskii ... The Russians ... opened their aristocracy to the subject peoples, accepting without question the prevailing local definitions of gentility and quibbling not at all about the ethnic or even religious origins of the newcomers, provided they were able and willing to carry out on a day-to-day basis the practical duties of members of the Russian elite". "Tsarist Government", 18-19.

⁵⁰ Hosking, *Russia*, 457.

⁵¹ Starr, "Tsarist Government", 31.

⁵² Cf. Motyly, "From Imperial Decay to Imperial Collapse"; Ronald Grigor Suny, "Making and Unmaking Nations: The Legacies of Empire", paper given at the conference, "Recasting Social and Political Identities in Eastern Europe", University of Colorado, Boulder, October 25-26, 1996.

⁵³ Cf. Roman Szporluk, "After Empire: What?" *Daedalus* 123 (3) (1994): 21.

⁵⁴ Rogers Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States: An Institutionalist Account", in *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 42; Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment", 223.

⁵⁵ Dunlop, "Russia: in search of an identity?", 29; see also Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment", 223; Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the USSR and Its Successor States", 51-2; Paul Flenley, "From Soviet to Russian Identity: The Origins of Contemporary Russian Nationalism and National Identity", in Brian Jenkins and Spyros A. Sofos, editors, *Nation and Identity in Contemporary Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 237-8.

⁵⁶ Flenley, "From Soviet to Russian Identity", 229.

⁵⁷ Victor Zaslavsky, "Nationalism and Democratic Transition in Postcommunist Societies", *Daedalus* 121 (2) (1992), 98-106; Slezkine, "The USSR as Communal Apartment"; Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States".

⁵⁸ Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment", 217.

⁵⁹ Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal apartment", 218; see also Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the USSR and Its Successor States", 28, 48.

⁶⁰ Flenley, "From Soviet to Russian Identity", 234; see also Riasanovsky, *Historical Consciousness and National Identity*, 12; Barber, "Russia: A Crisis of Post-Imperial Visibility", 37; Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment", 218; Hosking, *Russia*, 482.

⁶¹ Russian identification with the Soviet Union remained high almost up to the end. In interviews with the Russian population in Moscow in 1987 70 per cent still saw the entire Soviet Union as their motherland. Only 14 per cent identified the RSFSR (the Russian Republic) alone as such. The pace of events however, as so often in these cases, brought about a suspiciously rapid change of heart. In the March 1991 referendum on the preservation of the Soviet Union only 53.5 per cent of voters in the RSFSR voted for the Union. See Flenley, "From Soviet to Russian Identity", 234.

⁶² Guroff and Guroff, "The Paradox of Russian National Identity", 79-80; cf. Szporluk, "After Empire: What?"; Brubaker, "Nationhood and the National Question in the USSR and Its Successor States", 52; Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment", 229.

⁶³ See Rogers Brubaker, "Aftermaths of Empire and the Unmixing of Peoples", in *Nationalism Reframed*, 148-78. And cf. Eric Hobsbawm: "It is only today that Russians, English, and Spaniards are forced to think of themselves as 'nations' in the same way as Poles, Scots, and Catalans. It is far from clear how they are to do so." Review of Brubaker's *Nationalism Reframed*, *American Journal of Sociology* 105 (3) (1999): 845. Beissinger rightly points out that the "crisis of identity" that afflicts Russians today also

applies to the non-Russian peoples of the former Soviet Union, since their national definition is equally ambiguous as a result of Tsarist and Soviet policies. "The Persisting Ambiguity of Empire", 163.

⁶⁴ As many scholars have pointed out, there are some significant differences between "contiguous" or land empires of the Russian type and overseas empires like that of the British. This can lead to differences in the way the dominant imperial nation conceives its relation to other ethnicities and nationalities in the empire. Essentially in the case of overseas empires it is easier for the imperial nation to maintain a sense of separateness from other overseas groups - there is a sharper distinction between metropole and dependencies - than with land empires; so that when the empire breaks up the crisis of identity is not so great as in the case of land empires, where the dominant ethnic group is likely to be more merged and dispersed into lands adjacent to the national "homeland", existing in something more akin to a unitary state than to an empire. There is thus a greater sense of loss and disorientation when empire ends. For some helpful reflections on this see Starr, "Tsarist Government", 5-7; Suny "Making and Unmaking Nations", 7-8; Hobsbawm, "The End of Empires?", in Barkey and von Hagen, editors, *After Empire*, 12-16; Karen Barkey, "Thinking About the Consequences of Empire", in Barkey and von Hagen, editors, *After Empire*, 104-7. The English case is complicated by the fact that England was the "core" of *both* a land empire - the United Kingdom - *and* an overseas empire - the British Empire.

One further difference between the Russian and English cases might be mentioned here. Unlike the English the Russians have a long tradition of reflecting on themselves -

who they are, what is their destiny and mission in the world. After 1825 and the failure of the Decembrist rising this became an all-consuming question for the nineteenth-century Russian intelligentsia (see Hosking, *Russia*, 263-311). However it is important to note that the questions posed were more in relation to Russia (*Rus'*, *Rossiiia*) - what *it* was, what *its* mission was - than to Russians (*Russkii*, *Rossiiskii*) as an ethnic group. The question of Russian ethnicity was not a preoccupation of the Russian intelligentsia or Russian writers in general.

⁶⁵ Hechter, *Internal Colonialism* (see note 5).

⁶⁶ The existence of an English national consciousness has been claimed for the sixteenth century (Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 29-87) and also for the eighteenth (Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*). But not only is there the problem of the admitted fact (Greenfeld, *Nationalism*, 400-1) that this precocious nationalism then seems to go underground for a couple of hundred years, it is also not at all clear that the "nationalism" so claimed for the English carries much of the connotation of classic nineteenth-century style nationalism, especially its populism and concept of popular sovereignty (see on this, e.g. Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, 294-6). This point is well established, not just for English but for Irish and Scottish ideas of nationhood, in Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). I discuss this further in my forthcoming study, *The Making of English National Identity*, to be published by Cambridge University Press.

⁶⁷ Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument", *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992): 309-29; and especially Colley, *Britons* (see note 6). It should be evident to all who know her work how indebted I - like everyone else who writes on the subject - am to Colley's convincing demonstration that a truly and long-lasting British identity was established in the eighteenth century. What I stress in addition is how far this British identity was a surrogate for an English identity, which could be merged or nested in the larger identity and the cause for which it stood.

This is probably the place to comment briefly on the place of Ireland in all this. The question of Irish nationalism, and its relation to British/English identity is clearly an important one (as pointed out by a number of reviewers of this article). It is obvious that Ireland, claimed for the English crown in the sixteenth century, virtually colonized by the British in the seventeenth century, and annexed to Great Britain in 1801, always constituted a problem for the Protestant majority that gave the dominant definition to "Britishness". The predominantly Catholic Irish and their Gaelic culture could never be accommodated within the terms of either British or English national identity, at least as understood until the end of the nineteenth century; eventually, after much blood was spilled, this was to result in Irish separation. How far British/English identity itself was formed by opposition to the Irish is a difficult question to answer. With the Spanish and the French the British already had a Catholic "other" to hand, one moreover that always posed a greater threat than Ireland. Ireland could be, and often was, assimilated to this Catholic threat, and to that extent shared in the making of the Protestant, Anglo-Saxon character of British/English identity.

In a related discussion, it has been argued that Irish nationalism - at least in a cultural form - itself developed as a response to English cultural nationalism, dating as far back as the eighteenth century. See the two remarkable studies by the Dutch scholar Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Development and Literary Expression prior to the Nineteenth Century*, second edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997); *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997). In this case Irish nationalism arises earlier than is generally assumed, though Leerssen stresses that it was not until the nineteenth century that it reached its full flowering, especially in a political form. But to what kind of nationalism was Irish nationalism a response? Was it really *English*, rather than *British*? Leerssen, like Gerald Newman in *The Rise of English Nationalism*, does not seem to distinguish sufficiently clearly between expressions of "Englishness" and "Britishness" in the later eighteenth century. It is interesting that Colley can survey much the same kind of cultural evidence as these two - cartoons, prints, ceremonials and so forth - and come up with the conclusion that it establishes the case for a *British*, rather than a specifically English, national consciousness: see especially *Britons*, 164-193. A similar point can be made about the relation of royalty to British/English identity. No-one can deny the enormous importance of the monarchy in this respect; but it is vitally important to remember - as for instance Tom Nairn in *The Enchanted Glass* makes clear - that the royal family, at least from the time of the Hanoverians (themselves of course German), went out of their way to stress their British,

and indeed imperial, not their English character. Anything else would of course have been have been dangerous to the monarchy. In general one could say that much of the dispute about the dating of English nationalism springs from a common failure to distinguish clearly enough between Englishness and Britishness.

⁶⁸ Colley, *Britons*, 101-44.

⁶⁹ It needs to be noted that, as with all forms of religious identity, Protestantism could divide as well unite. British Protestantism most obviously excluded the Catholic Irish, a serious threat to national unity once the Irish Parliament merged with that of Great Britain in 1801. But it also suffered from serious internal divisions. As expressed officially through the established churches of England, Wales and Ireland, it could seem offensive to a variety of Nonconformist groups - Methodists, Baptists, Quakers and others (the Presbyterian Church of Scotland had its own Protestant malcontents, not to mention the mainly Catholic Highlanders). In that sense "church" and "chapel" marked lines of opposition, not convergence, within Britain. It meant that the Protestant character of the nation was as contested as much as a consensual matter. This could lead to such dangerous developments as the growth of Protestant Irish nationalism in the eighteenth century (Henry Grattan *et al*), as well as the crystallization of regional and national identities around whichever branch of the Protestant family happened to be dominant there, as for instance Methodism in Wales. See on this Keith Robbins, "Religion and Identity in Modern British History", in his *History, Religion and Identity in Modern Britain* (London and Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1993), 85-103.

None of this however means that , as a general category, Protestantism could not and did not act as a powerful unifying force - in the face, above all, of what was perceived as the Catholic threat from within (Jacobites and others) and without (especially French power). Referring to "the obvious centrality of the reformed faith to a sense of Britishness", Tony Claydon and Ian McBride declare that "Protestantism certainly defined the outer circle of [British] nationality", whatever internal divisions it also fostered: "The trials of the chosen peoples: recent interpretations of protestantism and national identity in Britain and Ireland", in Claydon and McBride (eds.), *Protestantism and National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 26, 28; see also Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England, c. 1714-80* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993). Paradoxically, as Hugh McLeod shows, despite the accession of Ireland to the Union and the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, anti-Catholic feeling in Britain continued well into the nineteenth century, fuelled by the immigration of large numbers of Catholic Irish into England and Scotland (as late as 1909, Protestant-Catholic riots in Liverpool could leave one person dead and force 157 Catholic families and 110 Protestant families to flee their homes):

"Protestantism and British National Identity, 1815-1945", in Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehman (eds.), *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 44-70. Eventually in the late nineteenth century, with increasing secularization, the rise of racial theories of identity ("Anglo-Saxonism", etc.), and the replacement of France by non-Catholic challengers such as Germany and the United States, Protestantism ceased to be a key element of British

national identity. But from the late sixteenth to the late nineteenth centuries it clearly played a central role in national self-definition.

⁷⁰ See, e.g., Gyn A. Williams, *When Was Wales? A History of the Welsh* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), 173-81; J. D. Mackie, *A History of Scotland*, second edition (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 333-55.

⁷¹ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983).

⁷² There is of course an immense literature on this. For some helpful pointers, see Kathryn Tidrick, *Empire and the English Character* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1982); John M Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1986), Paul Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Patrick Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), Bill Schwarz, editor, *The Expansion of England: Race, Ethnicity and Cultural History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), Dennis Judd, *Empire: The British Experience from 1765 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1996); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1999). See also Colley, "Britishness and Otherness", 324-6.

⁷³ Keith Robbins, "'This Grubby Wreck of Old Glories': The United Kingdom and the End of the British Empire", *Journal of Contemporary History* 15 (1980): 85; Colley, "Britishness and Otherness", 324; Judd, *Empire*, 2-3. It is interesting that, just as with the

Russians, complaints have been heard from the English that they have been neglected and even "oppressed" within the United Kingdom and the British Empire. This started with John Wilkes in the eighteenth century and has re-surfaced at various times right up to the present. . See Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, 171-9; Colley, "Britishness and Otherness", 326.

⁷⁴ See Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 101-30.

⁷⁵ *Ethnie* - following the French - is Anthony Smith's preferred term for an ethnic group or ethnic community. For the concept and the reasons for its use, see Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford UK and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1986), 21-46.

⁷⁶ See J.W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent: Victorian Historians and the English Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Chris Baldick, *The Social Mission of English Criticism 1848-1932* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983); Colls and Dodd, editors, *Englishness* (see note 4); Brian Doyle, *English and Englishness* (London: Routledge, 1989); Stefan Collini, "The Whig Interpretation of English Literature: Literary History and National Identity" in *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 342-73; Reba N. Soffer, *Discipline and Power: The University, History, and the Making of an English Elite, 1870-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Kumar, "'Englishness' and English National Identity".

⁷⁷ Paul Rich, "Imperial Decline and the Resurgence of English National Identity, 1918-1979", in Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn, editors, *Traditions of Intolerance: Historical*

Perspectives on Fascism and Race Discourse in Britain (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 34; Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*, 155-192; see also Hugh A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (Montreal and Hanover, NH: Harvest House/University Press of New England, 1982), especially 89-103.

⁷⁸ Since this was also the time - the noontime of empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries - when Irish, Scottish and Welsh nationalism also seriously got under way, the suggestion might be that while empire undoubtedly strengthened the sense of a common Britishness it might also actually have stimulated and given rise to thoughts of the *internal* differences within the United Kingdom, just as the overseas dominions and colonies forcibly led one to reflect on the vast variety of cultures and nations within the empire as a whole, and to schemes of federalism and devolution to accommodate this . For a brief account of these schemes see Robbins, “ ‘This Grubby Wreck of Old Glories’ ”, 87-90.

⁷⁹ For discussions of these developments, see David Sanders, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role: British Foreign Policy Since 1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989); Rich, “Imperial Decline and the Resurgence of English National Identity, 1918-1979”; Harry Goulbourne, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Post-Imperial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Robin Cohen, *Frontiers of Identity: The British and the Others* (London and New York: Longman, 1994); Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), Tariq Modood, “New Forms of Britishness: Post-Immigration Ethnicity and Hybridity in

Britain”, paper given at the conference, “The Expanding Nation: Towards a Multi-Ethnic Ireland”, Trinity College, Dublin, 22-24 September 1998; Christian Joppke, *Immigration and the Nation-State: The United States, Germany, and Great Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially 223-259. For the “regionalization” of the main political parties see note 80, below.

⁸⁰ On the general unravelling of British identity in the twentieth century, David McCrone, “Unmasking Britannia: The Rise and Fall of British National Identity”, *Nations and Nationalism* 3 (4) (1997): 579-596. See also, on the political developments affecting the unity of the United Kingdom, Neil Evans, editor, *National Identity in the British Isles* (Harlech, Gwynedd: Coleg Harlech Centre for Welsh Studies, 1989), Bernard Crick, editor, *National Identities: The Constitution of the United Kingdom* (Oxford UK and Cambridge MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics 1707-1994*, second edition (London and New York: Routledge, 1994); Roger Levey, “Governing Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland”, in Robert Pyper and Lynton Robins, editors, *Governing the UK in the 1990s* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 200-29 Brian Harrison, *The Transformation of British Politics 1860-1995* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 85-113; *The Economist*, “Undoing Britain?”, Supplement, “A Survey of Britain”, November 6, 1999. In 1998 the new Labour government of Tony Blair announced the establishment of regional assemblies for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Elections to the assemblies took place in May 1999. Already it is clear that for many Scots at least the new assembly marks merely a staging post to full Scottish independence. See

Andrew Marr, *The Day Britain Died* (London: Profile Books, 2000); Tom Nairn, *After Britain* (London and New York: Verso, 2000).

⁸¹ This is admittedly a strong statement. It is meant to refer generally to the period since the 1960s, though I would place special emphasis on the 1980s and 1990s. One could certainly see aspects of English nationalism in the response to postwar Commonwealth immigration in the late 1950s and the 1960s - the "moment of Powellism". But the crucial thing to my mind is that Powellism - and Enoch Powell himself - was disowned by the one force that could have given it national significance - the Conservative Party under Macmillan and Heath. Only with Margaret Thatcher did the party espouse - and then with the usual "Britannic" cover - a species of English nationalism. For Powell's nationalism, see Tom Nairn, "English Nationalism: the Case of Enoch Powell", in *The Break-Up of Britain*, 256-290; and generally for Conservative thinking in the period of the 1960s to 1980s, Goulbourne, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Post-Imperial Britain*, 87-125.

For English nationalism - or the absence thereof - in earlier periods, see note 66, above; see also my essay referred to in note 5, above.

⁸² On the Conservatives as "the party of English nationalism", see David Cannadine, "British History as a 'new subject': Politics, Perspectives and Prospects", in Grant and Stringer, editors, *Uniting the Kingdom?*, 12-13, 27. Following the resounding electoral defeat of 1997, this emphasis has become even more pronounced under the leadership of William Hague, faced as the party is with almost total loss of electoral support outside England and by the leader's own vociferous anti-European stance. The success of this strategy is yet to be shown; but one should note recent polls which show that the

overwhelming majority of mainland Britons do not regard the Northern Irish - whether Catholics *or* Protestants - as co-nationals, i. e. as British, and that a similar number wish to pull out of Northern Ireland. See *The Independent* (London), December 10, 1999: 3. A similar attitude could develop towards the Scots on the part of the English, if Scottish nationalism becomes too clamorous.

⁸³ As Hobsbawm pointed out some time ago, globalization makes the existence of many small, nominally sovereign, states more, not less, possible. It is indeed their very weakness and, in some cases, irrelevance as states that persuade the powerful international actors - large states and multinational corporations - to permit and often encourage their independence. See Hobsbawm, "Reflections on the 'Break-Up of Britain'", *New Left Review* 105 (1977): 6-7. For a different account of how globalization stimulates nationalism, see Anthony D. Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in A Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).