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## **NATIONALISM: THE GREAT POWERS FACTOR**

*The purpose of this article is to examine the history of nationalism from the perspective of the international historian. It covers the history of Africa, China and the USA rather briefly before concentrating on the history of Italy, Germany, France, Britain and the Habsburg Monarchy. The work of some key historians (Alberto Banti and Linda Colley) is mentioned and the lack of EU nationalism is examined. The conclusion after detailed examinations of the history of the European powers is that nationalism at any time can only be explained by the position of each power within the European balance or world balance of power. Each country defines itself with regard to the others. And their definitions define their nationalism.*

*Key words: nationalism, balance of power, Africa, China, the USA, Italy, Germany, France, Britain, European Union, Habsburg Monarchy, Historikerstreit, Ostpolitik, A. J. P. Taylor, Alberto Banti, Linda Colley*

The purpose of this article is to examine the history of nationalism from the perspective of the international historian. In doing so I shall cover the history of large parts of the world and shall attempt to place these diverse national histories within a new historical paradigm. Readers will have to judge for themselves to what extent this paradigm works. I shall start by outlining a number of assumptions that historians of nationalism make. With regard to Africa, for example, it is a commonplace to point out that the new nations which emerged there from the dissolution of the European Empires were debilitated by the artificial boundaries created and left to them by the great powers. In the words of one African historian: "...territorial boundaries and identities were colonial creations with little claim to be criteria for future states." To quote another: "The nineteenth century partition had left colonial rulers controlling blocks of land and peoples, which if not wholly arbitrary, rarely shared any common and distinctive historical identity." The result was that only a few truly African states with historic boundaries were internationally recognised; indeed, the majority of truly African kingdoms were not recognised at all in international law; boundaries of African states instead reflected European competition, spheres of company influence and the ability of European companies to make treaties with African chiefs; the use of force and superior technology, of course, aided the artificiality and ease of partition; ...boundaries were often odd and random; some colonial states were not even viable given their competing ethnic groups, and as a result the legitimacy of post-colonial rulers was often in doubt.

Now look at China. One Sino-American scholar has recently written: "A standard Western narrative on Chinese nationalism today can ... be summarised as follows: China prides itself as a historically powerful country with a distinguished civilization. Its decline in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the face of Western and Japanese incursions indelibly etched shame in the Chinese people and triggered their widespread attempts to reform their political system. Key to this endeavour is the quest for a strong state. Over the

past century and a half, various reform and revolutionary movements sought to build up the power of the state with the objective of retrieving China's past glory. Chinese nationalism is thus state-led, anti-Western, and steeped in an acute sense of national humiliation; in a quest for world eminence, it seeks to restore China's historical grandeur."

Another two China specialists wrote something similar: "In contrast to American nationalism of manifest destiny, Chinese nationalism is powered by feelings of national humiliation and pride." So let us quickly look at the American example. The USA emerged as a new nation after victory in war over Great Britain. True, her final triumph at Yorktown was due to the presence of the French fleet and French troops; true, too, George Washington hardly ever won a battle – certainly not an important one – yet the independence granted to the rebel colonies by George III and recognised by the powers of Europe, once reconfirmed in American eyes by the outcome of the War of 1812 (a draw in British eyes) meant that the new Republic could see itself as a light unto the world ("not just a place on the map", to quote Barack Obama's last State of the Union Message), a new Israel for God's newly chosen people, who could then go on to pursue their manifest destiny by buying Louisiana from France, seizing Texas, New Mexico and California from Mexico, and taking Florida from Spain. US nationalism, of course, also benefited from the 'log cabin to White House myth' and the firm belief in the "American dream", yet America's wartime origins and its military victories against not only the British, but the Indians, the Mexicans, the Spanish, the Germans and Japanese, its later peaceful defeat of the USSR in the Cold War, not to mention later military victories over Serbians, Iraqis and Afghans, all these triumphs of American arms more than anything else sustained and still sustain the belief that God had made the United States "His very own country", whatever setbacks may have been inflicted on it by Koreans, Chinese or Vietnamese.

Now let me turn to Europe. Here the story of nationalism is traditionally one of the organic growth of national sentiment as intellectuals invent a national tradition or history which is then spread from universities through secondary schools to primary schools while at the same time, crucially, economic change is producing a mass market and a proletariat to absorb the new nationalist myths and doctrines. Railways, steamships and new means of communication, a new national and expanding popular press, also driven by new technology, the expansion of towns, mass conscription into new armies, the rise of political parties also aid this process. In the words of my great doctoral supervisor, A. J. P. Taylor: "The first age of national awakening is strictly academic. It is led by university professors and is concerned with such things as the study of medieval manuscripts, the evolution of a national language from a peasant dialect and the rewriting of history on national lines. The second stage comes when the pupils of the professors get out into the world. Then it is a question of the language used first in secondary and finally in elementary schools; the battle is fought over popular newspapers, not over works of research. Finally, the elementary school-teachers themselves have pupils: men of some education, who remain peasants or factory workers. We have arrived at mass nationalism... Only when nationalism becomes a mass movement do the mass movements become important."

Taylor was discussing nationalism as it evolved within the Habsburg Monarchy. Yet even the latest views on European nationalisms outside the Monarchy still seem to reflect this sort of thinking. For example the LSE Journal *Nations and Nationalism* devoted most of an issue in 2009 to the views of the distinguished Italian scholar Alberto Mario Banti,

whose landmark book published in 2000 in Turin, entitled *La Nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell'Italia unita (Risorgimento Nation. Kinship, Sanctity and Honour in the Origins of United Italy)*, posited the Risorgimento as the outcome of purely cultural factors. In short, thousands of Italians became willing to die for the idea of a united Italy because they responded emotionally to the appeal of a nationalist canon of art, music and literature – works by Gioberti, Azeglio, Guerrazzi, Bellini, Foscolo and Balbo – which gave them a “common concept of the nation”. Hence Italian nationalism was an inspirational, emotional and organic process in which an intellectual elite inspired the sacrifices of the masses.

I shall return to professor Banti later, but for the moment, allow me sum up what I have been saying so far. Insofar as historians of African, Chinese and American nationalism are concerned, the key factor in the mentality of these is the action of the great powers or European Empires. The partition of the African continent leaves behind problematical, would-be territorial nation states whose artificial boundaries relate to neither historical states or nations; Chinese nationalism is predicated on expunging the shame of the incursions, “unequal treaties” and cultural impositions of the European and Japanese Empires; American national identity and self-confidence is predicated on US banishment of the European powers from most of North America (and through the Monroe Doctrine, from most of South and Central America) followed by military victory against her enemies all over the globe, all of this allowing herself to become simultaneously “the home of the brave and the land of the free”. In Europe, on the other hand, the picture of nationalist evolution is still too often one of an organic process in which intellectuals begin a narrative of nation-building which, although it connects with foreign affairs from time to time, none the less, is primarily a domestic political process.

Tonight I want to challenge this. My own view – my new paradigm – Sked’s Law if you like – is that all over the world, including Europe, political nationalism, at any given time, is the by-product of the working of the balance of power and that political nationalists are people who rationalise the implications, hopes and fears of the outcome of that balance for whichever nation they happen to belong to. Lucian Pye, an expert on Chinese nationalism, once characterised nationalism in general as “people’s reactions to the state and the state system”. I would change the emphasis to “people’s reactions to their nation or state within the state system as then determined by the balance of power.” This comes close to what Lei Guang has called *Realpolitik* nationalism although he used the term in a much more specific and restricted sense, with application only to China.

I would, however, make two clarifications about my paradigm. First, the term “balance of power” means much more than simply war: it refers to wars, peace treaties, alliances, fears of rivals, ambitions to expand, resentments of past historical outcomes, judgements of present balances and visions of the future. However, it is always predicated on consciousness of “the other” and of the interest of one’s own nation in comparison with those of others. This, of course, implies that there has to be some self-awareness of one’s self in the first place and that means that cultural self-awareness is required before political nationalism can be manufactured by the balance of power. So my own understanding is that cultural self-consciousness is usually produced first by religious, dynastic, linguistic and social factors before the balance of power transforms this cultural self-awareness into political nationalism.

Let me now demonstrate what I mean with regard to Europe and even attempt to show how today this paradigm still holds. I intend to look at Italy first of all and will start by re-examining the claims of Professor Banti. The trouble with his thesis is that although the literary lights of Risorgimento Italy preached regeneration, this was precisely because they believed that Italy had become degenerate. Balbo, Gioberti, Durando, Sismondi, Mazzini, Gallenga and others all claimed that the noble youth of the country had succumbed to *cicisbeismo*, an effeminate form of indolence that had arrived with the Spaniards in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and which the sultry Italian climate had encouraged. The country had been emasculated; wealthy and noble young men preferred to take pride in their outward appearance more than in studies or military training. Like the Greeks, they were the “degenerate descendants” of illustrious ancient ancestors, although unlike the Greeks they had escaped contamination by the Oriental Turks. “Who impedes the nobility and wealthy from studying and writing?... Who obliges young gentlemen to infemminire in their ozio?” asked Gioberti. Merely themselves. Balbo said that idleness was not originally a native vice, but had become a long-standing one. Sismondi said “Italians had ceased to be men”. Durando found Italian education “intentionally emasculating”. Mazzini claimed that Italians put their “little fatherlands” – their cities and villages – first and lacked the energy to fight for independence. Gallenga wrote that the Italian elite wasted its energy on “a life of insolence, idleness and unlawful excitement.” Foreigners all agreed, from Madame de Stael to Lamartine to German politicians; in their view, the dream of a united Italy was a joke. Profesor Banti, I think should have seen this other side of the coin. The true view of the Risorgimento canon was scarcely inspirational. The first national hero came in the unlikely form of Pope Pius IX and the Austrians were first challenged by that unromantic opportunist, Charles Albert.

In any case, Italy was in fact united by foreigners. The French had led the way during the revolutionary wars. Without them, wrote Salvemini, “the ancient regimes would have stayed on for who knows how many generations.” Napoleon then created his own Kingdom of Italy, although he had no high opinion of Italians and became king himself. And just as Greece achieved independence due largely to the accident of the battle of Navarino, Italy gained independence largely as a by-product of the diplomacy of Napoleon III and Bismarck. Certainly the Austrians could rely on defeating purely Italian armies, as in 1848, 1849 and 1866. In the words of a leading Italian diplomatic historian: “Italy – even if it is frequently denied today – was born and took shape amidst the profound transformations in international affairs which assailed the whole of Europe.” Or in Mazzini’s formulation shortly before his death: “Italy has been put together just like a mosaic, piece by piece and the battles for this cause have been won on our behalf by foreigners who were fighting for their own reasons of dynastic egoism, foreigners whom we should properly regard as our enemies.” And when the foreigners had gone, Azeglio commented: “Italy is made. We have still to make the Italians.”

Unfortunately, although Italy had been created by the great powers, she wished, thereafter, to be treated as one. This led her into empire-building and defeat at Adowa in 1896. Here more Italians died than in all the battles of the Risorgimento. The idea of becoming the equal of the great powers, however, never died as the ambition of the new liberal Italian state. It seduced Giolitti into the conquest of Libya in 1911 – 1912. By now Italian nationalists and some socialists believed that the social question could also be solved

by external means. The masses could be mobilised against the liberal state not by class war and class struggle but through international struggle between Italy, “the proletarian nation” and others (Germany, France, Britain) who were the “plutocratic powers”. This view of war as the means of nationalising the masses ended up as the basis of Mussolini’s fascist party. And when the liberals allowed themselves to be bribed into entering the First World War to gain not just the Italian Irredenta but lands which were not Italian, – and this against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the Italian people – the scene was set for near civil war after 1918 which ended in fascist victory. The Duce, however, was just as determined as the liberals had ever been to prove his nationalist credentials by foreign conquest and so invaded Abyssinia. The reaction by the Western powers then pushed him into supporting Hitler and participating in the Second World War. Italian nationalism would fail once again, however, to achieve its ends and only with Italy’s participation in NATO would the country eventually become an equal partner of the western European powers. All this shows I think that Italian nationalism was a rationalisation of its external situation, in short a function of its position in the European balance of power. This was also true of the other powers.

Take Germany for example. I don’t want to start the story too early. The question of how far any German nationalism existed before 1800 is a highly contested one. So too is the exact meaning of the terms “German nation” and *Reichspatriotismus*. In any case, the concept of nation, to whatever extent it existed, was powerfully motivated by the European balance of power. To quote Joachim Whaley: “In the late fifteenth century the rhetoric of the nation originated in response to the threats posed by the Turks and the French. In the 1530s and again in the late sixteenth century the same language was used in response to the onslaughts by the Turks. In the late seventeenth century it was employed once more against the French, in response to Louis XIV’s raid on German territory. In the late fifteenth century the king of France was denounced as ‘der Türk im Occident’”. Two centuries later he represented “der occidentalische Erbfeinde”... External enemies played such an important role in the public rhetoric of the Reich that it is no exaggeration to say that they generated a potent negative integration effect (author’s emphasis). The solidarity of the estates notably weakened once the external threats disappeared, from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Others have seen the German Reformation as the first manifestation of German nationalism. However, I would draw to your attention the remarks of Professor A. G. Dickens, that this “German nationalism... was predominantly anti-Italian and anti-papal... German patriotic sentiments had from time immemorial been directed most often against the popes...” Modern German nationalism, of course, was first stimulated by France, which was to play a key part in the German story. Whereas the majority of German states opposed Prussia’s war in 1866 against Austria, war against France in 1870 – 1871 was a different matter altogether. This one did bring the German states together and in a way that prevented Austria from seeking revenge. War scares involving France in 1830 and 1840 had also brought Germans together. Yet unity was hard to establish. For all the myth-making by German historians around the rise of Prussia from Frederick the Great onwards, the facts were that the majority of Germans must have hated Frederick the Great, that during the revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, Prussia had been more the ally of France than her enemy, that the Austrians did more for Germany in 1813 – 1814 than Prussia (Blücher’s army was two-thirds Russian), that Prussia followed Austria’s lead after

1815, that in 1848 – 1850, Prussia failed to take the lead in Germany, that the majority of German states did not wish to be Prussianised in 1866 and even after that a main cause of the war with France was precisely the need to stimulate a feeling of nationalism within the South German states, which were demonstrating particularist tendencies. Even after 1871, Bismarck was forced to federalise the Empire and to wage long campaigns against Reichsfeinde, or domestic enemies, within it – Catholics, Socialists, Poles, Danes, Alsations. He was forced to resign in the end because he was contemplating a *Gewaltstreich*, a coup, against his own constitution. Somehow, therefore, he never seemed able to settle down to a normal national political course. Perhaps his memoirs should also have been entitled *Mein Kampf*.

I don't want to pursue the German diplomatic record after 1890. It is too well known: two world wars, the Holocaust, the division and then the re-unification of Germany. All of these stages, of course, like those before them, forced Germans to think and rethink what German nationalism was about, what it really meant. The history of Germany and German nationalism is a most peculiar one. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century neither Germany nor German nationalism actually existed. "Where was the German fatherland?" asked the poet, and answers were unclear. At the end of the 1980s, the position was still unclear. Particularly after the *Historikerstreit* of 1986, Germans were divided about their nationality. Could they think of themselves as belonging to an honourable civilised nation, which for a short period of time, perhaps like other nations, had descended into the political and ethical abyss? Or were they to have the word Auschwitz etched into their minds forever? Could they "relativise" their past or were they to believe that it only started in 1949? Was their patriotism to be national or merely constitutional? One American historian, as a result, distinguished between "German Germans" and "non-German Germans". The debate intensified with the reunification of Germany after 1989. Brandt's *Ostpolitik* with its aim of creating a feeling of togetherness between East and West Germans ("two states in one nation", *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl* etc.) backfired. People thought of the two states as quite separate. All sorts of people in 1989 before the fall of the Berlin Wall said they had no desire for unification. After the wall fell, Socialists and Greens insisted that they still had no desire for unification, opposing a "Deutschmark capitalism" that would again threaten Europe. Unification indeed occurred but Kohl in return felt compelled to abolish the Deutschmark. Nowadays, Germans are supposed to see Europe as their fatherland.

So in 1789 and 1989 Germany appeared to lack a sense of nationhood. In between it is held to have been the most nationalistic of all states under Bismarck, the Kaiser and Hitler. Certainly, its peculiar nationalism was the outcome of external affairs: the end of the Holy Roman Empire and the need to find some sort of replacement; the struggle between Austria and Prussia; the almost unnatural unity created as a result of Bismarck's wars; the strains inside Germany caused by Bismarck; and then the regimes created in the wake of the Versailles Treaty and the division of Germany after 1945. The organic development of German nationalism as a sort of intellectual process from Herder to Treitschke to Weber to Rosenberg to Habermas, wrapped up in social and economic developments, doesn't really provide an alternative explanation. No, the transition of the German soul from one spiritual vacuum to another in the course of two hundred years was the result, primarily, of the workings of the balance of power.

Let us now briefly look at France. Some people would start the history of France with Clovis, Charles the Bald or Hugh Capet. De Gaulle and Napoleon favoured Clovis. But when did French nationalism begin? Did it exist as a medieval phenomenon or was it created by the French Revolution or the Third Republic? According to Guizot, it was first created by the Hundred Years War between England and France. Michelet believed the same. It was England which caused France to become aware of itself. England attacked not just French nobles but French peasants, with English soldiers requisitioning their produce, cutting down their trees and carrying off their women. Hence the emergence of “le bonhomme Jacques”, not to mention Joan of Arc. Modern historians are less sure about this medieval nationalism and are divided over whether regional patriotism or nationalism motivated key figures such as Bertrand du Guesclin, the Breton Constable of France. But as Douglas Johnson puts it: “...it remains true that patriotism like nationalism cannot exist in a vacuum. Such sentiments and aspirations generally exist as a by-product of some political unit’s relationship with a world that lies outside and beyond it.”

We can certainly write off the history of medieval and early modern France as the predetermined history of a geographical unit with natural boundaries gradually fulfilling a national destiny. There were five different languages spoken in the country. The so-called “natural frontiers” were actually both artificial and porous. France might well have become part of an Anglo-French or Franco-English Empire. The English ruled Gascony from 1154 – 1453 and after Henry V marched on France in 1415, the country was divided into three. With the fall of Calais under Mary Tudor, however, the English were to leave France for ever. Thereafter, however, there was always a fear of invasions and one part of French royal propaganda was that only the king could protect the kingdom from the foreigner. Still, who was to be king at any given time?

The later history of France can be characterised as one of civil wars. Any national loyalty now became the by-product of the struggle between the various provinces and factions involved. This period covered both the wars of religion and the wars of the Fronde. So did the long reign of Louis XIV then create a new nationalism for France? Certainly Louis dominated Europe, but, although by the end of his reign France had acquired a huge army and navy, she had been at war for the last thirty years of that reign and was by then riddled with dissent, impoverished, and vanquished. Louis’s intolerance had also led to the exile of 300,000 Protestants including the elite of the business and scientific world. So Frenchmen were well aware of the glory but also the ills of France. There was probably national consciousness, but what exactly it meant is difficult to say. Did Frenchmen want to fight in Louis’s wars? Did they welcome them? Did they identify with them in any way? Why should they have? Worse still, Louis’s 18<sup>th</sup> century successors also involved themselves in continual warfare so that by 1789 the people of France, who were supposed to pay for this warfare, were on the brink of revolution. The balance of power therefore would soon raise national thinking to a new level.

It is the French Revolution of 1789, of course, which is held to have created modern French nationalism. It dethroned the monarchy, promulgated the rights of man, instituted the *levée en masse*, acquired the natural frontiers and so created la Grande Nation. It made the Republic one and indivisible. Yet its achievements were all consolidated in war. The great slogan of the Revolution was *la patrie en danger*. Its course became determined by the outcome of its wars and its greatest product was to be that greatest of warriors, Napoleon

Bonaparte. Unfortunately, Napoleon as Emperor believed that only by continuous victory in war could he keep hold of his throne. This meant war ever afterwards until he could be defeated. In the meantime, he rearranged the map of Europe, made himself Emperor of France, King of Italy, Protector of Germany and distributed a variety of thrones to a variety of relatives. His actions in turn gave rise to nationalist currents throughout Europe. The balance of power now forced Germans and Italians, Spanish and Portuguese, Belgians and Dutch, British and Russians, Poles and indeed even the French themselves, to take account of their national predicaments. As for the French themselves, once Napoleon had been defeated for the second time, they resented their treatment in 1815 and demanded that future rulers – Louis XVIII, Charles X, Louis Philippe and Napoleon III – should all perform glorious deeds and win back for France a glorious reputation abroad. General de Gaulle was still making this the foundation of his regime in the 1960s, since French nationalism, in his eyes, demanded that France should be a global power capable of great undertakings.

Unfortunately the legacy of the Revolution was not as straightforward as the Jacobin or Napoleonic tradition asserted. The Revolution split France, with the Catholic Church and French monarchists regarding it (and the Enlightenment which they blamed for causing it) as diabolical. Nor was future French foreign policy blessed with unmitigated success. Defeat by Prussia in 1870 – 1871, the suppression of the Paris Commune, the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, and the humiliation of the proclamation of the German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles, meant that once again, France had to reconsider her national identity. The Third Republic was then plagued with scandals and divisions but the Dreyfus Affair most of all cleaved France between Right and Left with Action Française emerging as a monumental focus of opposition to republicanism. Maurras's movement called for the return of the monarchy, condemned socialists, Jews, freemasons and foreigners as the "four confederated states of Anti-France", supported the Catholic Church and attacked the Dreyfusards. It wanted to replace the Republic with an *ancien régime* type of monarchy with an hereditary monarch advised by provincial estates. The movement was anti-German but after the fall of France supported Pétain and Vichy along with its pro-Catholic, pro-family and anti-Jewish laws. Maurras actually believed that when the war was over, the French monarchy would be revived. The result, instead, was that he was jailed for treason while a new Fourth Republic was established. The Right, in fact, could only ever have triumphed in France with successful foreign backing. For a start, it did not have the complete support of the Catholic Church, since the Vatican on key occasions rallied to the Republic; even more importantly, the military record of the Republic was superb: it was the Republic which had conquered Europe before Napoleon and had defended *la patrie en danger*; it was the Republican Gambetta who had held out longest against the Germans in 1870; it was the Republic which had won in 1918 and which had regained Alsace-Lorraine. On the other hand, it was the Right under Vichy which had surrendered to and collaborated with Hitler.

The Fourth Republic gave way, however, in 1958 to General de Gaulle over the issue of Algeria (Gaullism in 1954 had also defeated the attempt to bring about French participation in a European Army). Once again foreign policy and France's place in the world was at the centre of French politics, although this time the Left was found wanting. Thereafter, as already indicated, the national search for prestige was to dominate de Gaulle's period in power. Today, France's image of herself is still remarkably tied up with visions of grandeur, so that I believe the case that French nationalism throughout the ages has been



determined by the balance of power outside and within France, also holds. Peoples judge themselves in comparison to others, although, admittedly, as I have already explained, this presupposes some self-awareness in the first place.

The other great power with a supposed long national history is Great Britain or the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Today, and for some three or four decades now, it has been fashionable to dismiss the history of Britain as artificial and to point to the fact that she is a multi-national state with the English, Scots, Welsh and Irish having separate histories of their own. Curiously, the growth of this new historiography coincided with British entry into the European Community and with the development of European regional policy. Another theory which arose about the same time but which reflected the rise of political nationalism in Scotland was that the Scots had only joined the Union to create the British Empire and that, with the demise of that Empire, the United Kingdom would break up.

Some Scots thought, and still think, that Scotland would be better off as a totally independent state within the European Union. Nor, in the context of this new historiography, is it to be overlooked that the unexpected nationalist reaction in the United Kingdom to Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982 and the transformation of the image of Mrs. Thatcher both nationally and internationally after the British victory there, followed by her dramatic economic transformation of Britain itself, so alarmed the British Left that intellectual steps seemed necessary to educate the benighted masses out of their still primitive national pride. Finally, within this same context, with the fall of the Soviet Union and the resulting futility of employing class as a vehicle to explain historical progress, supra-nationalism soon replaced Marxism as the new inspiration for left-wing intellectuals. It, too, promised peace, brotherhood, central, bureaucratic planning and rising living standards for the masses but without any need to adumbrate difficult theories of dialectical materialism, class war and inevitable revolution. The new climax would no longer be the dictatorship of the proletariat and the disappearance of exploitative capitalism but the disappearance of selfish nationalism, outdated national sovereignty and the primitive nation-state.

In 1992 Linda Colley produced a book which gave academic respectability to all these tropes. It was entitled: *Britons. Forging the Nation, 1707 – 1837*. In its conclusion, she wrote: "...we can understand the true nature of the present crisis only if we recognise the factors which provided for the forging of a British nation in the past have largely ceased to operate. Protestantism, that once vital cement, has now a limited influence on British culture, as indeed has Christianity itself. Recurrent wars with the states of Continental Europe have in all likelihood come to an end, so different kinds of Britons no longer feel the same compulsion as before to remain united in the face of the enemy from without. And, crucially, both commercial supremacy and imperial hegemony have gone. No more can Britons reassure themselves of their distinct and privileged identity by contrasting themselves with impoverished Europeans (real or imaginary) or by exercising authority over manifestly alien peoples. God has ceased to be British, and providence no longer smiles." A paragraph later she added, in a sentence of singular British insularity: "Whereas the Germans and the French, who are more confident about their unique identity, see a Europe without frontiers in terms of opportunity, the British are far more inclined to view it as a threat."

Professor Colley, I fear, got things entirely wrong. Today, many, probably most British are Eurosceptics because they simply don't see the point of a European Union. Unlike the

French and Germans they won the Second World War and see no need to surrender the independence which they successfully defended in it to foreign bureaucrats. They have never had to crave *Gleichberechtigung*. They see no need to control democratic Germans. They simply want free trade. Their continental security has been safeguarded by NATO. Nor have they worried about losing imperial possessions around the world. That process started in 1783 and continued ever afterwards. The only possessions they really worried about – Canada, Australia and New Zealand – were all independent by 1914 and later fought alongside us (as did the Americans) in two world wars. Losing India, Burma, Pakistan or large parts of Africa after 1945 caused absolutely no trauma. Only Malaysia made some kind of profit for us and most Britons did not know or even cared to know where Malaysia was. They could not tell the difference between a colony, a dominion and a protectorate and, again, did not care to do so. Britain had no Vietnam or Algeria. She had led the movement to abolish the international slave trade. She had turned Empire into Commonwealth. Today, it even has members – Angola and Mozambique – who were never even parts of the British Empire. And, curiously, we even turned down a French bid to join the Commonwealth in 1955. There is no sense in Britain therefore – despite all the political correctness of Linda Colley and others – of any need for imperial *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*.

Nor is the United Kingdom about to break up despite limited devolution laws. The Scottish Nationalists have been in power in Edinburgh to little lasting effect and despite their renewed call for a referendum on independence, few people expect it to succeed. (The English may even be more in favour of Scottish independence than the Scots!) Even in Northern Ireland, the IRA has been defeated militarily (a British diplomatic secret) and forced to the peace table. Its former leaders are now ministers under the British crown and the Queen has already visited Dublin this summer. Meanwhile, the British government has twice been involved in major wars in the Persian Gulf, in two Balkan wars and in little wars in Sierra Leone and Libya, in all of which wars the European Union has had almost no part to play. Its largest state, Germany, has kept out of all the major ones. That tells us everything we have to know about comparative self-confidence.

Let me return to Colley's thesis for a last time. It has been comprehensively demolished by Jonathan Clarke who has pointed out that the idea that a Protestant Britain was forged in wars against Catholic France is sheer nonsense. The case against is overwhelming. For a start, Britain's main enemy in the late seventeenth century was Protestant Holland and during the 18<sup>th</sup> century we conducted a long, civil war with our extremely Protestant colonies in North America (who were aided of course by Catholic France). Meanwhile, we were at various times in the same century allied to France herself and to Catholic Austria and Portugal. Besides, Catholicism in revolutionary France had already been smashed by the Revolution. Hence Colley's use of Protestantism is rather crude and unconvincing. She also ignores the difficulties caused by the accession of the Calvinist William III to the British throne and by that of the Hanoverian Protestant George I.

More importantly, she does not understand that "British" was a term already applicable to Britain in 1603 and that after 1707 it did not suddenly become a new form of nationalism. Indeed, the English continued as ever to think of Britain and England as synonymous and while this may have upset Welsh, Scots and Irish, only the latter in later centuries became infected by European-style nationalism. The great fact is that Britain never acquired a nationalist tradition in a racist or ethnic sense, certainly not the English, whose statesmen

did not see themselves as ethnically different from the others. Thus they carried on being English while Scots, Welsh and even the Irish before 1914 were assimilated into English political institutions. And that is still the case today. My fellow Scots, along with the Welsh, simply fail to understand just how much apathy Scottish and Welsh nationalism actually generates in England. So if, English, Scots and Welsh go about describing themselves as separate nationalities and occasionally use the term British for foreigners to make life simple for them, that's fine. Who in England really cares?

Yet one point needs to be stressed. Most English (Scots and Welsh, too, to a very large extent) still believe in Britishness as the essence of a state (really England) that has been united since 927 and although conquered by the Normans very soon absorbed them. Thereafter it resisted all foreign invasion and conquest and indeed defeated the Spain of Philip II, the France of Louis XIV and of Napoleon, the Germany of the Kaiser and Hitler, and overcame the Cold War challenge from the USSR. It has also been the home of liberty and justice and has therefore lived up to the providential role assigned to it by Bede (673 – 735 AD) in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* when he wrote of "God's dealings with his original Chosen People". It is no surprise, therefore, that the King James translation of the Bible contains the word "nation" 454 times whereas the Vulgate uses *natio* on merely 100 occasions. In short, English and later British success in war has reinforced a millennium-long patriotism or nationalism that continues to be inborn but is so natural that it does not need to be expressed. Indeed, discussions of Britishness, as Gordon Brown discovered, are considered "un-British". Thus although American and British nationalism both rest on the assumption that each is the product of the martial deeds of a uniquely successful and free people, the British like to leave that assumption unspoken, whereas American politicians have to articulate it almost daily.

All of which brings me to my final example, not Austria but the Habsburg Monarchy. This dynastic state has had a bad press from liberal and nationalist writers and historians everywhere. Yet it, too, lasted for a long period of time and despite its reputation, it also managed to win wars against the French and even defended itself rather well against both Frederick the Great (who survived by luck) and Napoleon (who was defeated in 1814 by the strategic genius of Radetzky, the brilliant diplomacy of Metternich and the stalwart military leadership of Schwarzenberg). Radetzky also saved the Monarchy and Europe in 1848 and 1849. Today, however, historians are obsessed with the fall of the Monarchy in 1918 although the truth is that it almost fell to Louis XIV, Frederick the Great, Napoleon and the revolutions of 1848. Even Bismarck contemplated destroying it before he ended up becoming a second-rate Metternich, defending Central Europe from a resurgent France by constructing a European alliance system. Metternich, of course, had already done this for longer and with less tension and greater success.

In any case, as a result of all these military survivals, the framework of the Habsburg Monarchy survived within which the nationalities of Central Europe could develop their national cultures in peace. True, the wars of the nineteenth century changed that framework at different times – the whole point of this lecture – but these changes must be examined evenly.

For a long time it was argued that the Monarchy eventually fell on account of its treatment of its nationalities. I myself have argued against this viewpoint and I am happy to say that all the latest research seems to support me. Certainly, the troops of the nationalities

serving in the First World War stayed loyal till the end. And in the key nationalist region of the Monarchy with regard to survival in wartime (the lands of the Bohemian crown) the evidence demonstrates that the masses even there after almost three years of incredible hunger and hardship were still not prepared to desert their emperor.

Before the war, moreover, all the latest research now downplays national tensions in favour of apathy, bilingualism and *Kaisertreue*. And if one Swedish historian can refer to a low-level, underlying tension in the Monarchy in the decades before 1914 after examining the views of half a dozen Viennese intellectuals, it is time for him to look at the much deeper tensions being shown in Britain, France, Italy and Russia before 1914 and the views of their intellectuals. In the end, the Monarchy disappeared as a result of the workings of the balance of power; the fate of its nationalities as independent nations thereafter, also depended on the workings of the balance of power.

It is now time to sum up. I have been talking not about state formation but about the effect of the balance of power on the national identities and the degree of nationalism to be found within the parameters of any state at any given time. I don't deny the role of scholars or intellectuals or historians or clerics or politicians or statesmen in the formulation of national histories, folk myths or legends, nor do I deny their importance. My basic point, however, is that all these individuals and nations had to work, and still do work, within a historical or current framework that was or is still decided by the balance of power. And the task of the intellectuals and politicians involved, was and still is essentially to rationalise the outcomes of international power struggles, so that these outcomes could or can be absorbed within national cultures and adapted to national policies.

Recent history should prove this to you. Why, for instance, has the European Union failed to generate any profound feeling of European nationalism? Perhaps, because, as Alan Milward explained in a famous book, the real purpose of the EU was "the rescue of the nation state", i. e. the continuation of the balance of power process within EEC institutions. Or perhaps, ironically in view of EU propaganda, it is the lack of war in Europe since 1945 – primarily thanks to NATO – or the lack of any really existential diplomatic crisis in Western Europe that explains this? Certainly, whatever European nationalism (or enthusiasm for EU membership) exists in Eastern European member states can be attributed to the implosion of the Soviet Empire and remaining fears of post-Soviet Russia.

Again look at the US and the UK. Can anyone deny that the Vietnam War after 1965 or the Falklands War of 1982 or the Iraq war in 2003 caused intellectuals and ordinary people to re-examine not just American and British foreign policy but the very sources of American and British nationalism? Look at the various debates on Britishness conducted in recent decades by the British media. Given what I have said about the mute British self-confidence built up over centuries, it was amusing if not surprising to read pathetic admonitions by left-wing intellectuals to "remember Suez", or claims by Euro-fanatics that "the UK [was] too small to be independent". One distinguished historian of British imperialism even claimed to be at a loss to explain complete British indifference to the loss of Empire: "There must have been more to it than that. Nations do not suddenly lose empires without their leaving a mark." Clearly he believed my thesis but simply could not apply it to Britain. I hope you will now believe in it too.