

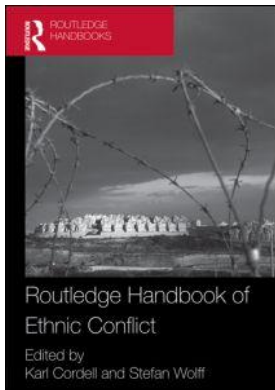
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Karl Cordell, Stefan Wolff

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Daniele Conversi

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3 Ideology and nationalism

Daniele Conversi

All official institutions of language are repeating machines: school, sports, advertising, popular songs, news, all continually repeat the same structure, the same meaning, often the same words: the stereotype is a political fact, the major figure of ideology.

(Roland Barthes)

Great ideology creates great times.

(Kim Jong Il)

As with other sociopolitical terms, there is no universally agreed definition of ideology in social theory and political science and the concept remains a broadly contested one. This destiny is only partly shared by the second partner of the couple here described, nationalism. Its main pillar, the term ‘nation’, is probably too slippery and so self-referential as to defy any attempt at an ‘objective’ definition (Conversi 1995, see also Jackson Preece in this book). However, there is some agreement that nationalism is an ideological movement speaking in the name of a self-defined nation and aiming at controlling political institutions (most often the state) within a specific territory. Being an ideological movement, ideology plays a central role in nationalism. Furthermore, ideology and nationalism are coeval terms since their origins equally lie in the French revolution: whereas the genesis of the term ‘nationalism’ is an issue of relative contention (Hroch and Malecková 2000), the term ‘ideology’ is usually located in Destutt de Tracy’s definition of it as the ‘science of ideas’ and Napoleon’s disparaging use of it to describe his adversaries (‘the ideologues’). It was the Napoleonic usage which really defined the term.

While the meaning of nationalism remained broadly unchanged, the concept of ideology shifted meaning a few times after its inception. The *Oxford English Dictionary* gives several definitions of ideology, beginning with ‘a system of ideas or ideals, especially one that forms the basis of economic or political theory or policy’ (*OED* 1997: 908). Therefore, a relationship between ideology and political action needs to be established. The next paragraphs will focus on how the study of ideology can shed light on the issue of congruence between state and nation.

This chapter describes generally ideology as a set of ideas articulated around a sociopolitical programme devised by specific individuals, whom we may recognise occasionally as the ‘ideologues’ and, until recently, could be identified as ‘intellectuals’. Today, they appear to us most often as media pundits.

What is ideology and what is not? The reply mostly depends on the replier. Protean concepts like modernity, progress, development and, the latest arrival, globalisation are

imbued with ideology, yet not all scholars and social commentators promptly recognise this status. Although the way these terms are used imply adherence to ideological constructs and platforms, presentism prevents identifying them as ideologies. From the promontory of the present time, we can look backward and discern ideology where our predecessors simply saw the natural order of things, but in our day it may be more tricky to see the wood for the trees.

The term ideology can be used in two possible ways: one neutral, the other critical or pejorative (Thompson 1990: 56). While the critical use is implicit in any analytical study of ideology, is a neutral approach at all possible? Indeed, it may be difficult to ‘stand by’ and see ideology in purely objective terms, since scholarly endeavours are also informed by ideology. This goes beyond Weber’s classic statement about value-neutrality in his 1918 address at Munich University. Most often, ideology is enriched by passion and, as the poet Pier Paolo Pasolini could synthesise knowingly, it stems directly from passion: ‘Passion, analytical in itself, gives way to ideology, synthetic in its nature’ (*La passione, per sua natura analitica, lascia il posto all’ideologia, per sua natura sintetica*) (Pasolini 1960: 493).

Most scholars of nationalism agree that ideology is paramount to the creation and reproduction of nationalism, although they accord different degrees to its centrality. An illustrious exception was Ernest Gellner, who disagreed with the importance of ideology. Gellner argued that nationalism needs neither intellectuals nor an ideology, since nationalism was a semi-spontaneous response generated *ex-machina* by a fragmented social system disrupted by the uneven impact of industrialisation – although he recognised that nationalism developed first in the West. More commonly, Elie Kedourie (1993) regarded nationalism as a fully fledged ideology spreading across the world via aping and imitation.

Ideology is a component of Anthony Smith’s definition of nationalism as well (Smith 2001: ch. 2). The latter is ‘an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential “nation”’ (Smith 1999: 256, 2001: 9). Its core doctrine or belief system is composed of at least six crucial interconnected ideas or ‘basic propositions’, namely that: (1) the world is divided into nations, each with its own character, history and destiny; (2) the nation is the sole source of political power; (3) loyalty to the nation overrides all other loyalties; (4) to be free, every individual must belong to a nation; (5) every nation requires full self-expression and autonomy; (6) global peace and justice require a world of autonomous nations (Smith 2001: 22). Elsewhere, Smith reiterates that ideology is a key element in the success of nationalism, as ‘it serves to unify and focus the many grievances and aspirations of different social groups within a particular community or state, and to explain to and activate “the people”’ (Smith 1998: 116). Kedourie, Gellner and Smith are representative of various ‘schools’ of thought concerned with the origins of nations and the nature of nationalism. While Kedourie’s explanation is entirely centered on ideology, Gellner radically excludes its importance, whereas Smith adopts a more nuanced position seeing the role of nationalist ideology as shaped by pre-existing myths and symbols.

Before considering the relationship between nationalism and ideology, we should understand what is broadly meant by ideology, what is not, and why not. Beside liberalism and conservatism, communism, socialism and fascism have been named as emblematic twentieth-century ideologies. Capitalism is more often seen as a sociopolitical system founded on the adoption of market economy principles. It is less

generally accepted as an ideology and is thus often subsumed as a practice of liberalism – jointly with its ideological sub-varieties: laissez-faire capitalism, radical capitalism and corporate capitalism. Yet the very belief in capitalism as the ideal, standard sociopolitical system, as well as the panacea for all sorts of social problems, rests on firm ideological grounds. Many have idealised capitalism as the most perfect and unmatched socioeconomic model, indeed as the only possible one. Susan Sontag acutely observed that ‘the ideology of capitalism makes us all into connoisseurs of liberty – of the indefinite expansion of possibility’ (Sontag, cited by Sanders 1998: 62; see Seligman 2005: 67).

Other unsuspected candidates for the category of ideology proliferate. Civil society has recently been added as a candidate for ideology status, while its meaning has become politically transversal, that is, shared by both right and left with different goals and purposes (Chambers and Kymlicka 2002; Ruzza 2010). In particular, the ‘concepts such as “civiness” or “civility” in relation to civil society and the public sphere ... are recurrent in the idealisation of civil society by all political actors’ (Ruzza 2010). For Hannah Arendt, even the ‘Third World’ was ‘not a reality but an ideology’ (1970: 21). The US-led ‘war on terror’, justifying ends and means, was also shaped as an ideology of a good and virtuous (American) society fighting against the ‘bad society’ (Conversi 2010c).

However, the most important ideology accompanying all the above visions is less often described as an ideology. In fact, these visions were formulated within, and as responses to, the crises brought about in different stages and periods by the end of an era, variously labeled as agricultural society, the *Ancien Régime*, the Dark Ages, pre-modernity or in other ways: by opposition to the latter, the term *modernism* encompasses all those world visions which fully embraced modernity and its consequences, trying to conceive new scenarios of ‘togetherness’ and competing political projects based on the full acceptance and endorsement of modernity. Modernism has thus been articulated through a set of often incompatible ideas whose sociopolitical programme was predicated on a (Western-centred) vision of modernity as the supreme good, and hence on the rejection of elements which, according to its competing ideological foundations, could be perceived as ‘anti-modern’. The cult of modernity, progress and development became the *idée fixe* of the industrial and post-industrial age. In short, modernism has permeated not only all other ideologies, including nationalism, liberalism, fascism and communism, but also every major aspect of modern social life. In a nutshell, modernists predicate that all that is modern is positive, while all that is ‘anti-modern’ needs to be rejected. Given that both Nazism and Stalinism viewed themselves as modernising ideologies, we can work out what might be the consequences on finding oneself on the wrong side of the ‘modern/anti-modern’ divide.

The modernist ideology is often encapsulated in the popular myth of the ‘mad scientist’, who, blinded by absolute faith in progress, crafts Frankenstein-like monsters in his secluded laboratory. The ‘mad scientist’ paradigm operates within a set of beliefs which are often a radical and gross interpretation of prevailing visions of modernity. The mad scientist’s stance is often erroneously interpreted as personal ambition verging on pathology and emanating from individual attitudes. However, similar attitudes did not emerge casually as aspects of a post-religious, particularly post-Christian, world. They were part and parcel of the prevailing *Zeitgeist* unleashed by the advent of Western-style modernity and the ‘Westernisation of the world’ (la Branche 2005; Latouche 1996). In the process, non-Western ideologies and world visions were

discarded and destroyed, in short labelled ‘anti-modern’. ‘Development’ itself became an ideology or, even more, a ‘global faith’ imposed by the West on an often recalcitrant world (Rist 2002). For Christopher Lasch (1991), with its belief in a linear, steady, indefinite rise in living standards as the inevitable destiny of mankind, ‘faith in progress’ assumes the eschatological trappings of established religions.

Here I intend to point out that there is an apparent link between the notions of modernity, progress and nationalism. In fact, modernism as the ideology of progress is deeply related to nationalism. For Liah Greenfeld (1992) it is impossible to conceive of modernity outside nationalism, since the latter provided the ideological forge and mould to shape the former. Modernity is simply unthinkable outside a non-nationalist world, so that nationalism ‘represents the cultural foundation of modern social structure, economics, politics, international relations, education, art, science, family relation, and so on and so forth’ (Greenfeld 2006: 162). However, the opposite can also be said in that modernism is seen as the structural foundation of all of the above. The totalising nature of nationalism thus overlaps and interpenetrates with the doubly totalising nature of modernity. For this reason, one can legitimately suspect that Greenfeld is speaking about the ideology of modernity, rather than the ideology of nationalism – even though she seems to reject a clear-cut distinction between the two.

Modernity, nationalism and ideology

One of the problems in nationalism studies is the peculiar use of the term ‘modernism’ to refer to a group of scholars stressing the modern origins of nations and nationalism – a usage largely derived from Anthony D. Smith’s classification proposal (Smith 1998). The problem with both the classification and the debate is that most studies tend to treat ‘modernity’ as a ‘fact’ or a world vision rather than as an idea. The term ‘modernism’ has different meanings in other fields, notably among art historians, where it is more often used to describe an artistic movement that emerged in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe. In this chapter, ‘modernism’ refers to a wider ideological category, which sees modernity as the founding parameter of a new era implicitly defined by the belief in unlimited progress. This has remained the dominant ideology and paradigm at least up to the beginning of the twenty-first century and it is probably the most popular ideology across the world. Modernism thoroughly accompanied the growth of nationalism and, in most cases, preceded it – although Greenfeld asserts that nationalism preceded modernity and indeed acted as its midwife.

For most scholars of nationalism and modernity, the incipit of both remains the French Revolution, which is also when the term ideology was first coined. The doctrine of nationalism was officially formulated in the Declaration of the Rights of Man, its public display of symbols touched off with the *Fête de la Fédération* in the summer of 1790 and its definitive test occurred in the battlefield at Valmy (1792). Before the French revolution, the propaganda apparatus of absolute monarchs was largely confined to the upper elites and exercised via the courts, as loci of aggregation and public display of royal paraphernalia aiming to ‘seduce’ or co-opt provincial elites. Absolute sovereigns increasingly appropriated religious symbolism to prop up their legitimacy via appeals to their subjects, particularly under Louis XIV, the *Roi Soleil*. At those times, ideology was still largely overlapping with religion. Although the primary movers and motives have not been clearly identified, the St Bartholomew’s Eve massacres against Huguenots (Protestants) in Paris (1572) indicated an obsession by ruling elites with the power of

socioreligious ideas. The targets were not cultural or religious differences per se but 'ideological' opposition and dissent, as heterodox communities were considered dangerous by ruling elites (Conversi 2010a).

With modernity, secular ideology seized the state in 'absolute' terms. The targets were no longer framed in purely religious terms, but in terms of their entropy or anti-entropy (Gellner 2006), that is, cultural compatibility or incompatibility with an increasingly centralised, expanding and controlling state. To the most radical of Jacobins, cultural difference became anathema.

Under the French revolution, the physical extermination of ideological-cultural opponents was pursued within a new 'national' framework, which slowly evolved into a broader drive to 'nationalise' the masses (Conversi 2007, 2008b). The Jacobin media played a key role: from July 1791 to July 1794, 7 million copies of various journals were purchased for distribution in the army, even though most conscripts could not read or write (Lynn 1996: 127). We have scant documentation of local resistance to Parisian directives, although we do have sketchy records of the harsh condition of army life in post-revolutionary France (see Bell 2008: 121–23). During the ensuing years of ideological emphasis on the sacred nature of *La Patrie* (the Fatherland), the average French citizen began slowly to identify with the soldier as the supreme expression of collective will, viewing war as the finest of national virtues (Lynn 1996: 121). Before the *levée en masse*, volunteers were recruited through an array of visual effects and media grandeur, often surrounded by a festival atmosphere punctuated by martial music (Ozouf 1991).

On the other hand, ideology alone was not enough. After France was invaded (1792), a deeper cycle of conflicts began, so that revolutionary violence became the main unitary catalyst among the Jacobins. The victory at Valmy (20 September 1792) was the first one in human history of an army inspired by nationalism as throngs of soldiers immolated themselves to shouts of 'Vive la Nation!' (Bell 2008: 130–35). Although victory was made possible by casual events such as bad weather, Valmy was fully seized by Jacobin propaganda as a foundational myth unleashing waves of enthusiasm and the belief that fighting in the name of freedom would grant soldiers a sort of immortality and even invincibility. Also for this reason, the first 'total war' in modern history was conceived and put into practice by French revolutionary elites (Bell 2008), so that ideology became essential in the way wars were to be fought over the next two centuries. The 'first total war' was also the first ideological war and the first nationalist war in human history. This is the foundational myth of the first explicitly modern nation-state and represents the triumph (even if no one realised it at the time), of a new ideology linked to (positivistic) ideas of modernity and progress.

The French revolutionaries were divided into multiple ideological currents. But nationalism provided the unifying ideology and was constantly mobilised by all factions without exception. As competing ideologies vied for mass following, they mobilised their own media by seizing, creating and disseminating propaganda through local venues, from public speeches at mass rallies to manifestoes, slogans, patriotic songs, bulletins and newsletters. Competition among ideologies became fierce, peaking under the Reign of Terror. Robespierre made it clear that this was a struggle for personal survival and those politicians who could not control the mob or posed a threat to his power risked falling under the guillotine. Initially adverse to war (Scurr 2006), Robespierre became in the end one of its main beneficiaries. By continuously mobilising people in preparation for war, Parisian elites could achieve unified support in what had

become one of the most fragmented, ideologically splintered and identity-fractured countries in Europe. The traditional gap between Paris and the provinces was to be overcome through coercion and consensus, and via the simultaneous use of terror, war and ideology. The systematic mass killing by government troops also led some historians to identify the Vendée uprising (1793–96) as the first modern genocide (see Conversi 2010a). In the 1990s, egalitarian Jacobin slogans and directives permeated the discourse of genocidal leaders in Rwanda, such as ‘to ban, once and for all, the spirit of intrigue and feudal mentality’ and to extol ‘the valuation of labour’ (Verwimp 2000).

Most historians recognise the use of ideology and nationalism as drivers of mass engagement since the French revolution. The destructive nature of European state-building was palpable to many citizens, yet patriotic-nationalist intoxication made opposition impossible. Thus, few intellectuals found the courage to oppose state-building, let alone denounce it. The ‘thinner’ ideology of anarchism developed largely in contrast to the practice of *étatisme*, whose ideological glue was provided by nationalism (see Ostergaard 1981). Intensively mobilised during periods of inter-state conflict, patriotism allowed the state to gain a foothold in society and penetrate areas from which it was initially excluded. Opposing the nation-state as an institution and patriotism as its legitimating belief, Leo Tolstoy linked both to organised violence (Christoyannopoulos 2009).

Dominant nations, dominant ideologies and class analysis

The rapid demise of Marxism after 1989 has involved the abandonment of some important concepts, which can still be useful to sociopolitical analysis. In Marx’s analysis, ideology is part of the superstructure, merely an accessory of the economic structure made of class relations. Yet, beyond this apparent blunder, Marxist scholars have refined the concept through the years, while still holding that ideology is forged by the bourgeoisie as a tool to convince members of other classes that the bourgeoisie’s interests are the interests of all. For Antonio Gramsci, the dominant classes establish cultural hegemony through patterns of consumptions, values, norms, habits, and so on. Cultural hegemony explains why the bourgeoisie can so easily enforce its models of ‘false consciousness’ amongst the working class, whose interests should be rationally at odds with those of the bourgeoisie, but are sidelined in the name of inter-class allegiances, notably through consumerism and nationalism. In fact, nationalism shares the status of ‘false consciousness’ with other non-class-related ideologies and practices, *in primis* the ‘fetishism of commodities’, so vital to maintain the system of ‘class supremacy’.

More recently, ideology has been defined as the way ‘in which meaning serves to sustain relations of domination’ (Thompson 1990: 58), specifically the domination of some classes over others. This ‘meaning’ needs to be synthesised and diffused through the articulation of ideas into a cohesive and viable ideology. In fact, once firmly established and enshrined in power relations, ideology is spread by means of mass manipulation. If seized by the state and the mainstream media, nationalism/patriotism can certainly become an ideology most suitable for the concentration of power into the hands of a few.

Most ideologies are embedded into political power and the crucible of power in the modern era is the nation-state. The more controlling and authoritative the state is, the more pervasive its founding ideology, and vice versa. Althusser identifies a plurality of ideological state apparatuses (ISA), those ‘realities’ which ‘present themselves to the

immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialised institutions' and which function both via violence and ideology (Althusser 1971: 143). These are distinct from the unchallenged "(repressive) state apparatus" holding sway alone over the public domain, yet the distinction between public and private 'is a distinction internal to bourgeois law', while 'the State [controlled by the ruling class] ... is 'above the law'. ..., [it] is neither public nor private; on the contrary, it is the precondition for any distinction between public and private' (144).¹ The essential distinction is in fact that 'the Repressive State Apparatus functions "by violence", whereas the Ideological State Apparatuses function "by ideology"' (145). This is important for what we have described so far, in that violence is opposed to ideology, yet there is an obvious complementarity between them.² An ideal model of supremely repressive state functioning purely by repressive measures is clearly impossible, so that violence and repression always need to be supplemented by ideology. Althusser brings forward the example of the army and the police which 'also function by ideology both to ensure their own cohesion and reproduction, and in the "values" they propound externally' (145). On the other hand, a 'pure' ideological state apparatus cannot exist, as ideology also needs to be supplemented by violence, even though this may be 'very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic'. As various forms of nationalism always underpin the functioning of the modern state, its performance has been historically rooted in both violence and ideology. However, before seizing the state, nationalism is also expressed in a plurality of 'ideological state apparatuses', including trade unions, lawyers, physicians, lower and higher education, and the very family, where notions of common descent are actuated since early childhood. For Althusser, these apparatuses serve their purpose of reproducing the power of the bourgeoisie and reinforcing the capitalist system. He then relates nationalism explicitly to the communications apparatus ruled by the mass media, together with chauvinism, liberalism, moralism and economism (154–55).

In terms much cruder than Gramsci, the Orwellian word 'brainwashing' as a strategy of mind control was coined to define a method of coercive persuasion widely used under communism. The original Chinese term was adopted in English during the Korean War and its popularisation is credited to the anti-communist intelligence agent Edward Hunter (1902–78) (Seed 2004: 27–31; Taylor 2004: 3–6). Beyond its obsession with the spectre of 'communist world domination', Hunter's *Brainwashing in Red China* (1951) became a classical crude description of how ideology-driven manipulation can radically alter the very identity of the individual and destroy her/his sense of the past.³ Such a form of all pervasive control has been absorbed into daily routine and assumed as habitus by most citizens. To resume, China's ideological state apparatus was used in full strength to instil the official ideology into the minds of most citizens to the point of terminating previously existing sentiments, attitudes and world visions. Although during the Cold War only communist brainwashing became 'worth' considering, both Mao and Stalin operated through patriotic/nationalist mobilisation, speaking in the name of the very subjects to be oppressed, which can be even harder to oppose.

Is nationalism an ideology?

In the modern era, ideologies have become mass phenomena that moved millions of people: as such they have permeated most forms of thought, including scholarly thought. They have been often embraced with such an ardour and naive enthusiasm as to become avenues of fanaticism, self-immolation and mass suicide. After the end of

World War II, the word ‘ideology’ was unsurprisingly discredited. Many observers at the time considered that competing ideologies had led to some of the worst human excesses in human history. Nationalism came in for particularly heavy criticism, as it was claimed by some to be the direct ancestor of fascism in its various guises.

After World War II (later on, outside Europe), political ideologies were thus seen as drivers of mass engagement unleashing major human dislocations. Amongst them, it is customary to consider nationalism as a particularly powerful ideology destined to mobilise massive crowds. Unlike other ideologies, nationalism was rarely formulated through a coherent system of thought and a precise programme. It lacked recognised foundational thinkers and its protean nature meant that it remained often parasitic on other ideologies by simply adapting to them, while, of course, shaping them. Therefore, there are authors who consider nationalism as a dependent, weak form of ideology (see San Martín 2008). Postulating a distinction between fully fledged and ‘thin’ ideologies, Freedon argues that nationalism ‘severs itself’ from a broader ideological agenda, while being incorporated into various ‘host’ ideologies. Like green thought and feminism, nationalism deliberately replaces and removes central concepts, thus being structurally unable ‘to offer complex ranges of argument, because many chains of ideas one would normally expect to find ... are simply absent’ (Freedon 1998: 750). As its operational incapacity leads to a shrinking of the political dimension, nationalism is defined as a ‘thin-centred ideology’. Yet, it is still recognised as an ideology.

If nationalism is an ideology, either ‘thin’ or ‘fat’, is it plausible to see it, not merely as an ideology among others, but as the dominant ideology of the modern age? Indeed there is strong scope/reason for arguing so and for affirming that nationalism is ‘the dominant operative ideology of modernity’ since ‘nearly all contemporary sociopolitical orders ... tend to legitimise their existence in nationalist terms’ (Malesevic 2006: 317). This is in line with Smith’s assertion that in every continent ‘nationalism has become the main legitimating belief system’ (Smith 1998: 116) and Connor’s recognition of the centrality of nationalist ideology in legitimating power (Connor 2004). If nationalism is the ideology that underpins the nation-states system, then nationalism can be described as ‘the most successful ideology in human history’ (Billig 1995: 22). It is a convincing argument, but this chapter reformulates it by incorporating the wider ideological context within which nationalism first emerged and then thrived. This is the all-pervasive context of expanding modernity and the ideology of technocratic materialism and corporatism which accompanied it.

To the extremes: nationalism, modernism and developmentalism

Modernism assumed various forms: from a ‘right’ to which all citizens are entitled, to a ‘must’ for state leaders to impose upon often reluctant populations. In its extreme forms, it became the ideology of development for development’s sake at whatever the costs. At such extremes, modernism can be redefined as ‘developmentalism’. Far from being a secondary ideology, the latter has indeed accompanied nationalism and socialism well into the twentieth century, moving at centre-stage with the advent of totalitarianism and its obsession with mass industrialisation and the development of tightly controlled communication networks. This can be exemplified by Fritz Todt’s (1891–1942) ideology of road-building as key to German economic strength and Gottfried Feder’s (1883–1941) Taylorist vision of technocracy as the ‘perfect’ society ruled by engineers. Turning citizens and peasants into pliable ‘masses’

through overwhelming state machines, totalitarian and post-totalitarian regimes justified destruction in the name of ‘progress’ and economic development. Extreme developmentalism, or the obsession with ‘catching up’ with the core countries of the wealthy West irrespective of its human costs, was already visible in the ‘desperately modernising’ drive of the Russian military before the Bolshevik revolution (Mann 2005: 99) or in the obsessive Westernising trends emerging within the Ottoman Empire just before its collapse (Mann 2005: 114–19). More recently, the ideology of development allied with security concerns has been central in carrying out most contemporary genocides, notably in Rwanda (Uvin 1998; Verwimp 2000).

Later on in the twentieth century, Taylorism became an influential method of maximising industrial efficiency and serialising mass production. The Soviet Union’s New Economic Policy (NEP) before 1928 belonged to a broader developmentalist crusade and Lenin’s embrace of Taylorism’s ‘scientific’ method was more than:

a means of discipline that could remould the worker and society along more controllable and regularized lines ... Lenin encouraged the cult of Taylor and of another great American industrialist, Henry Ford, inventor of the egalitarian Model T, which flourished throughout Russia at this time: even remote villagers knew the name of Henry Ford (some of them believed he was a sort of god who organized the work of Lenin and Trotsky).

(Figs 2002: 463)

From a scientific method, Taylorism had become an ideology, indeed a faith, which was host of a broader ideology of progress. The ‘natural’ unit of reference for the ideology of progress was the nation, indeed the nation-state, remarkably so in the Soviet Union, where Wilsonian-Leninist principles of self-determination and popular sovereignty became the norm (Connor 2004: 34–37). The cult for discipline and work became part of a wider militarisation of society which reached its peak later on under Stalin, as totalitarianism reinforced and extended its grip. Some radical Taylorists envisaged indeed ‘the mechanization of virtually every aspect of life ... from methods of production to the thinking patterns of the common man’ (Figs 2002: 463).

Taylorism’s weight upon Hitler’s plans was even more substantial: by 1938, the German Autobahn network of over 2,000km began to surpass in extent the United States’ highway system. The ideology of a highly interconnected and powerful nation, envisioned as a unified living body, aimed at seducing every single citizen. Hitler’s idea of a Volkswagen (people’s car) dated back as early as 1933, owing much to Ford’s Model T. This is well beyond what elsewhere has been narrowly defined as ‘the paradox of reactionary modernist reconciliation’ (Herf 1986).⁴ In Italy, the avant-garde ideology of futurism (1909–45), with its idolatry for the machine, its cult of mass violence and its contempt for ordinary lives, produced the first artistic synthesis of all these trends (Conversi 2009). In general, as I have argued, the stress on mass emotions and irrationality (including the rejection of Enlightenment rationalism) and the full embrace of modern technology were coeval and belong to the same world vision. They date back to the battle of Valmy and the birth of state-making nationalism with its radical, exclusive and unrivalled appropriation of ‘*Vive la Nation!*’ cries and easily stirred cheering crowds.

The concept of *developmental dictatorship* has been applied to the cases of Italy’s Fascism (Gregor 1979) and Spain’s Francoism (Saz 2004). A national developmentalist

ideology underpins nearly all totalitarian systems, whose regimes attempted to shape a new man as the ideal citizen ready to inhabit the promised land of a new industrialist utopia. Soviet and Maoist propaganda posters depicted the advent of mass industrialisation in superbly idealised terms, as the gateway to a new millennium. Nazi-fascist regimes shared with socialist-communist ones variants of a Western-centred ideology of development while paying lip service to ‘tradition’ and honouring the ‘fathers’ of the nation. Totalitarian systems married nationalism and ideologies of progress in quasi-religious, mythopoietic terms (Griffin 2007). An extreme, rather than moderate, modernist ideology was the main common denominator amongst all these regimes and surpassed by a long way the already commanding prominence of nationalism and patriotism.

Progress, modernisation, development are social concepts associated with power and thus conceal the traits of ideology. Indeed, being more pervasive and ‘material’ than other ideologies, modernism can be described as the dominant ideology of modern times. As progress and related concepts became intrinsic attributes of the nation, they were fully appropriated by nationalism. A step further, Greenfeld (1992) suggests that they cannot even be conceived in a world without nations and outside nationalism.

I have defended the general view that nationalism cannot be conceived outside modernity, but only to identify modernity itself as embedded in its own ideology, modernism. Let us now relate the above to what nationalism studies have so far produced on this relationship. Although for most scholars nationalism is indissociable from modernity, others argue that modernity provided only a catalyst for pre-existing groups to seize power or negotiate power-sharing arrangements through representative leaders. For some authors, nationalism was no mere chaperon of modernity, but it provided a congenial tool to impose modernisation and spread the ideology of progress among the masses: in the footsteps of Hans Kohn, Liah Greenfeld (1992, 2006) argues that ideas were central to the birth and spread of nationalism. This is a view shared by political philosophers, like Kenneth Minogue, and historians of ideas, like Elie Kedourie. Greenfeld (2006) also argues that nationalism was essential to the propagation of the ‘spirit of capitalism’.

Intellectuals and the media: from ideology to imagology

Intellectuals play a different role at different times and in different countries. A clue to their importance can be found in the way their freedom of speech is restrained by incumbent regimes. How do governments react to the activity and writing of intellectuals able to articulate some form of uncomfortable political opposition? The murder of Anna Politkovskaia (2006), Sergei Protazanov (2009), Natalia Estimirova (2009) and other Russian activists points to the central role of the writer in articulating ideas about freedom in Russian politics and society. It also underlines the government’s fear of losing control of the official discourse and the ruthless way the citizen is supervised by exercising absolute jurisdiction over the public sphere. Similarly in Tajikistan fifty to eighty journalists have been killed from 1990 to 2000, a period in which Glasnost and Perestroika were just beginning to enable a liberal press (Allison 2006; see also Atkin 1995).

Situated in between the media pundit and the fully fledged intellectual, the figure of the journalist has a specific impact in early stages of democratisation, when the written word may still enjoy a greater influence than the unmediated image. The stance articulated by the murdered Russian writers was powerful enough to warrant their

elimination, also because it was framed in highly non-nationalist terms and advocated universal human rights transcending nationhood. Quite the opposite can be said of the nationalist *raison d'état* of the murderers, since Putin's exploit of state patriotism has affected minorities, non-nationalists, universalists, human rights activists and rival Russian nationalists as well.

The intellectuals have often played a central role in nationalism studies, beginning with the work of Carlton Hayes and, to a lesser extent, Hans Kohn. As we have seen, Elie Kedourie places intellectuals at the core of his explanation of the spread of nationalism. From an original emphasis on the role of intellectuals, Anthony D. Smith has subsequently nuanced their centrality, because nationalist ideologies are 'not simply the product of intellectuals, nor are most intellectuals ... free-floating and disoriented, nor are most of them able to exercise the kind of influence that Kedourie attributes to them. The same is true of their ideas, which are effective in society to the extent that they mesh with pre-existing popular notions and collective memories. Only then can they mobilise large numbers of people' (Smith 1988: 116). However, ethnosymbolism dismisses elites' manipulation outright, so that the dynamics of power are not laid bare or critically discussed. On the other hand, intellectuals played a key role in the passage from *ethnie* to nation (Conversi 1995).

But what does the word 'intellectual' mean? Which are its contours? How sophisticated does a nationalist intellectual need to be? How refined and deep are the ideas to be propagated? The founder of Basque nationalism, Sabino Arana y Goiri (1865–1903), was not a champion of finesse and could scarcely articulate his thoughts in a coherent, let alone pleasant, way. Reading his *Obras Completas* (Complete Work) is a daunting task, as its works are replete with vehement interjections, caustic tirades and ranting sermons interspersed with slang and xenophobic epithets. Yet, Arana's work was central to the success of Basque nationalism, with long-term repercussions on its subsequent evolution (Conversi 1997). What matters is the founding intellectual(s)' organisational capacity. In spite of his limited vocabulary and incapacity to enunciate in-depth observations, Arana was certainly an excellent agitprop, an orator and haranguer perfectly capable of perorating the Basque cause amongst a small coterie in which he emerged as the charismatic catalyst. Such managerial ability also derived from his ability to communicate in the language of the people and from his ability to mobilise the founding myths of Basque nationalism (Douglass 2004). Basque nationalism owed most of its visual symbols and values to Arana. Considering that he died at the young age of thirty-eight, Arana's achievement was immense: single-handed he formulated the first Basque nationalist programme, coined the country's name (Euskadi), defined its geographical extension, founded its first political organisation, wrote its anthem and designed its flag (Conversi 1997: 53). All these required impeccable organisational skills and a total dedication to the cause. Thus, in spite of his hidebound and paltry educational qualifications, Arana could be described as an 'intellectual' because he was able to articulate and marshal the national aspirations of his followers. This can be visualised as a boundary-building enterprise: Arana's goal was to create, recreate, and reinforce the boundary between Basques and non-Basques, that is, to define a modern Basque identity.

Nowadays, the surrogate 'intelligentsia' is centred around media operatives – those who need more appearance than brain, and those whose subliminal passages have direct impact on human thought and actions. Does this mean that nationalism can today subsist without intellectuals? Is ideology possible or even thinkable without intellectuals? A passage from Milan Kundera's novel *Immortality* can shed light on this question:

... we can rightfully talk of a gradual, general, planetary transformation of ideology into imagology ... All ideologies have been defeated: in the end their dogmas were unmasked as illusions and people stopped taking them seriously ... Reality was stronger than ideology. And it is in this sense that imagology surpassed it: imagology is stronger than reality, which has anyway long ceased to be what it was for my grandmother, who lived in a Moravian village and still knew everything through her own experience: how bread is baked, how a house is built, how a pig is slaughtered and the meat smoked, what quilts are made of, what the priest and the schoolteacher think about the world ... she had, so to speak, personal control over reality.

(1991: 126–27)

In their triumphant path towards the conquest of hearts and minds, dominant ideas have regularly been accompanied by powerful images. Images serve to convey rational, irrational and non-rational messages by using emotional styles and instinctive methods. In an era dominated by one-way, or unidirectional, media, most notably the radio and television, these images have become increasingly simple. (The internet is not necessarily unidirectional, allowing the user a margin of self-determination and sometime the possibility to interact and respond.) In the passage from ideology to imagology, forms of banal nationalism have rapidly spread without the mediation of intellectuals and without soliciting critical thought. This has led to a global impoverishment of politics and the rise of ‘banal’ forms of mass mobilisation through artificial simulation (Simons 2000). In practice, the reign of image belongs to a ‘hyperreality’ which merges reality with fantasy (Baudrillard 1994: 1–42), as well as to a generalised ideology which is no longer mediated by intellectuals. Thus the answer to the opening question is that in technologically advanced postmodern societies intellectuals may indeed become redundant, despite the fact that ideology permeates society at all levels. In various ways, the totalitarian dream of a homogeneous world order deprived of critical thought, yet firmly grounded on ideology, has become a potential reality with globalisation. Where the iron fist of totalitarianism failed, the velvet glove of globalisation seems on the verge of succeeding. Yet nationalism and ethnic conflict seem to expand with global homogenisation, either as a reaction to it or as their inevitable companion.

Why have intellectuals become redundant in a media-dominated, ‘post-critical’ world? Part of the answer lies in the raise of banal nationalism. As we have seen, a purely mentalist definition of ideology is no longer commonly accepted. Ideology is rather seen as encompassing a variety of current pre-reflexive manifestations, including behaviour, attitudes and patterns of consumption. For Michael Billig (1995) even the prettiest manifestations of nationhood are based on nationalist ideology: We are deeply steeped in a nationalised world vision, thus becoming unconscious carriers and replicators of nationalist ideology, whether we accept or reject nationalism in principle. Typical examples are those who ‘restrict the term “nationalism” to the ideology of “others”’ (Billig 1995). By sin of omission, the very fact of nationalising/ethnicising (i.e. attributing blame of nationalism to) others, particularly stateless nations, implies a certain degree of nationalist performance. As with other ideologies, its proponents can easily detect its shadow elsewhere, but not at home. ‘Subconscious’ nationalism is also common in mainstream academia: when scholars quote approvingly Ernest Renan’s famous defence of the ‘*nation de volonté*’ (nation of will) smuggling it into their argument as an example of ‘civic’, or even ‘civilised’, nationalism, they are not simply espousing

an ideological stand, but also tacitly endorsing a nationalist-inspired vision, which is ultimately directed towards exclusion.

Whereas Billig focuses on the daily ideology of banal nationalism, Althusser focuses on the untold, which he calls lacunar discourse; things are merely suggested rather than openly enunciated. Indeed, ideology-supporting discourse does often work by changing the meanings of terms. The revolutionary triad *liberté-égalité-fraternité* served to underpin its opposite: servility, inequality and conflict. The most nationalist of the triad, *fraternité*, was the last one to be added, with its emotional and communitarian stress on kin-related moral obligations (Ozouf 1997: 4353–89). Nationalism seems to advocate strong egalitarian values proclaiming the equality of all citizens or, rather, all the members of the nation. However, this ‘equality’ is largely fictitious and, once seized by the state, the concept is usually usurped to promote more demanding forms of surreptitious inequality (Conversi 2008a). In times of war and under mass conscription, ‘equality’ is to be paid by ordinary citizens with their own lives: war demands that ultimate sacrifice is made on the basis of citizens’ equality, although informed citizens may know that the richest usually buy or arrange their way out of the front line.

Finally, a whole set of irreflexive habits can be thought as expression of ideology. As externally induced behaviour, consumerism may not be perceived as an ideology in itself, but as part of a collective inclination to equate personal satisfaction with the incessant pursuit of material possessions. Already in 1899, the US sociologist Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929) identified patterns of ‘conspicuous consumption’, that is, the act of spending money for the sake of appearance and for attaining or maintaining social status – although the phenomenon was much less pronounced at that time than it is today. With the expansion of global consumerism since at least the 1970s, the ideological aspects of the process seem to have passed unnoticed. Yet, systematic attempts to oppose consumerism and other behavioural ‘-isms’ are likely to be perceived in terms of ideology. For instance, enoughism, a set of recently proposed practices and lifestyles based on ideas for a better world, is clearly dedicated to defeat consumerism in both ideology and practice (Naish 2008). Enoughism, not inevitably a branch of Green thought, is a quintessential cosmopolitan ideology, where the concern for the nation is wholly subordinated to that for the ecumene. In this sense, it belongs to a large group of universalist ideologies which aim to provide an alternative to nationalism, as well as to consumerism.

Globalism, nationalism and ideology

In the 1960s the ‘end of ideology’ was prematurely announced, anticipating a new era liberated from the dogmas of socialism, liberalism and conservatism (Bell 1960). Over a quarter of a century on, some of these conjectures have seemingly materialised, finding a suitable symbolism in the fall of the Berlin Wall. But, whether or not an end of all ideologies really took place during the age of ‘reflux’, those vast sociopolitical changes are still firmly set within a greater ideological narrative: modernity. Moreover, nationalism remained with us and, as we all know, its appeal has done nothing but grow.

The ostensibly ‘paradoxical’ relationship between globalisation and nationalism has been stated and restated countless times. Likewise, various reasons have been indicated as the main culprits for this ‘unexpected’ outcome. One of them is the demise of cultural certainties and traditions accompanying the process of global homogenisation. It is still highly debatable whether globalisation has actually bolstered cultural exchanges and

métissage, or has rather limited inter-ethnic relations to superficial domains by filtering inter-cultural contacts through the lenses of Westernisation – or indeed Americanisation (Conversi 2010b).

The copious and repetitive literature in globalisation studies has so far failed to produce any groundbreaking text, even in the form of a journal article. The very term ‘globalisation’ appears increasingly undefined, hard to grasp and shrouded in conceptual mystery, with some authors pushing its meaning back to Portugal’s imperial expansion or even to Roman times, thus making it scholarly inoperative. Historically, the concept’s current usage emerged in the wake of an extreme variant of liberalism, neo-liberalism, sometimes defined as ‘the ideology of the Washington consensus’ (Callinicos 2003: 149).

There is an ongoing debate as to whether globalisation is part of an ideology, an ideology in itself, or rather a mere economic/cultural fact. For William Greider (2000), globalisation is not ideology, but naked power: ‘The great, unreported story in globalisation is about power, not ideology. It’s about how finance and business regularly continuously insert their own self-interested deals and exceptions into rules and agreements that are then announced to the public as “free trade”’ (Greider 2000). For others, globalisation is a new phase of particularly harmful and penetrating imperialism and some see it as deeply related to war (Barkawi 2005). Finally, others see its hidden agenda as implying a total restructuring of power relations throughout the world with the dramatic potential of unleashing an unpredictable blowback effect: thus, for Dennis Smith, globalisation has stirred up ‘a tide of global resentment’ which can only be ‘held back by fear of American military power’ (Smith, D. 2006).

However, in line with what we have said, globalisation was also accompanied by the all-pervasive ideology of globalism: In other words, globalisation, the actual practice, should be distinguished from globalism, its accompanying ideology – which is tacitly assumed by many scholars working in the area of globalisation. For Manfred B. Steger (2002), globalism not only is ‘a new ideology, but also constitutes the dominant ideology of our time against which all of its challengers must define themselves’.

If globalism is an ideology, is it a variant, indeed a deepening, of the ideology of modernism? Given the latter’s relationship with nationalism, we should not be surprised to see patriotic and ethnic conflict accompanying both. Ultimately, the answer depends on whether we choose to consider globalisation as a new, and more radical, phase of modernisation, or as an entirely new departure from it, as argued by post-modernists.

Some of the scholars who years before had anticipated and celebrated the end of ideology found nothing to rejoice about in the new era as they discovered that corruption had largely replaced ideology on a global scale (Bell 1993). After the Cold War, unconstrained American rule over world politics, economy, law and culture became the norm and its consequences upon daily practices, attitudes and lifestyles will permeate contemporary ideology for generations to an extent which still needs to be fully weighed up.

Conclusion

Although ideologies are central to the study of nationalism, there has been disagreement about whether or not nationalism is truly an ideology. However, it is undeniable fact that nationalism is associated with modernity and, as I have argued, modernity in itself is based on the ideology of modernism.

We have seen how nationalism can be either described as the dominant ideology of modernity, or as one among many modern ideologies. If nationalism is freeloading on other ideologies, which is then the core ideology around which it gravitates? Whereas most scholars agree that nationalism developed in tandem with modernity, few have considered modernity as conveyed by its own specific ideology. None of the leading nationalism scholars identifies the possibility that nationalism can indeed be the host of the wider ideology of modernism, since the latter is rarely identified as such.

By articulating specific projects for action, ideologies can become modern tools for mass domination, particularly when seized by incumbent regimes. They are distinguished from other forms of manipulation by their reliance on political thought and action, obedience to a set of principles, and the embodiment of related ideas in symbols, myths and rituals. As we have seen, this implies that our daily lives are unconsciously permeated by ideological content, including many routine habits that we may perceive as ‘facts’.

This chapter has asserted the following points: a definition of ideology cannot be conceived in purely mentalist terms and needs to incorporate more general dispositions, particularly the dimension of habitus and unreflective behaviour. At any rate, nationalism is an ideology, either ‘thin’ or ‘banal’. Indeed, it is the most powerful ideology of the modern age and it may even be its defining ideology. However, modernity itself needs to be reconceived and redefined as an ideology and for this scope the term modernism has been used here. The root of all the above phenomena (nationalism, ideology and modernity) is firmly placed in the French revolutionary wars.

Notes

- 1 As for the state ideological apparatuses, ‘it is unimportant whether the institutions in which they are realised are “public” or “private.” What matters is how they function’ (144).
- 2 ‘No class can hold State power over a long period of time without at the same time exercising its[cultural] hegemony over, and in, the State Ideological Apparatuses’ (Althusser 1971: 146, original in italics, 340–42).
- 3 Recently the brainwashing metaphor has been extended to ‘deep capitalism’ and cultural Americanisation. Conveyed through films and fictions, brainwashing has slowly mutated ‘from an external threat to American values to an internal threat against individual American liberties by the US government’ (Seed 2004: 1).
- 4 Indeed, its roots go back to Weimar and earlier: Germany’s ‘three mandarin thinkers’, Heidegger, Schmitt and Freyer, all devoted numberless pages to the issue of technological supremacy. Before handing in his resignation as rector of the University of Freiburg, Martin Heidegger had advocated Germany’s urgent need to combine *Technik* and *Kultur* (Herf 1986: 109).

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