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Revisiting key debates in the study of nationalism

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The purpose of this article is to lay out the debates and arguments around three key broader issues that dominate nationalism studies: (a) the meaning of a nation and nationalism and the relationship between political and cultural nationalism; (b) the origins and character of nations and nationalism; and (c) the civic-ethnic dichotomy and the relationship between nationalism and liberalism. It does not aim to provide definitive answers to the complex problems associated with nations and nationalism but rather to provide an overview of these debates by examining the existing literature on nations and nationalism. The final section discusses the position of new approaches to nations and nationalism and how they have problematised the key assumptions of the mainstream understanding of nationalism. The article, in light of an overview of the literature, draws four important conclusions. First, the academic journey of nationalism has reached a stage where the current consensus is that nations are socially constructed and historically contingent phenomena, and the current focus of the scholarship is on looking at the intersection between the cultural and political aspects of nationalism. Second, nations and nationalism possess a multifaceted character with particularity, subjectivity, and relativity as their defining features, representing that a single, universal explanation of nationalism is neither feasible nor morally desirable. Third, to understand the multiplicity and diversity of nations and nationalism and the ways in which elements of this multidimensionality intersect, it is necessary to treat them as open-ended, unstable, dispersed, protean, particular, and contingent phenomena. Finally, deep contestation constitutes a source of power and strength for nations and nationalism.

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Introduction

The phenomena of nation and nationalism are the forces that shape the modern world, among others. They are global phenomena occurring worldwide, despite the scepticism articulated by many scholars about their continuing survival and relevance. They, as modern concepts, first originated in Europe in the late eighteenth century. Within the study of nationalism, though scholars are deeply divided on the origins of nations and nationalism, there is a general consensus that they bloomed and acquired their modern political meanings and significance in the context of the French Revolution of 1789. The French Revolution defined the nation as a democratic, sovereign, secular republic of equal citizens, a definition that dominated nationalist studies and movements throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. By asserting the principles of democracy, constitutionalism, equality, national self-determination, the sovereignty of the people, and republicanism as the basis for the new political order in Europe, the revolution significantly contributed to the spread of the phenomena of nation and nationalism from France to other countries in Europe, particularly Italy, Germany, Russia, and Spain. The Napoleonic wars, the 1848 revolutions, and post-1848 national unification-oriented movements made the nation and nationalism fashionable throughout Europe and North America in the 19th century. As milestones in the development of nation and nationalism in the 20th century, anticolonial movements widely extended them to three non-western continents: Asia, Africa, and Latin America. As a result, nation and nationalism have acquired a global presence, taking various forms in different socio-economic and political contexts.

While there is a general consensus that nations and nationalism are happening everywhere, scholarship on nationalism is deeply engrossed in intense debates about the meaning of nation and nationalism, their origins, and their nature and scope. This article provides a theoretical review of these debates and is based on an examination of existing literature on nations and nationalism. Accordingly, the article is divided into four broad sections. The first section examines the debates and disputes about the meaning of a nation and nationalism and the relationship between political and cultural nationalism. The second section discusses the competing arguments of primordialism, modernism, and ethnosymbolism about the origins of nations and nationalism. The following section analyses the intense debates about the civic-ethnic dichotomy and the relationship between nationalism and liberalism. The fourth section discusses the position of new approaches to nations and nationalism and the ways they have problematised the key assumptions of the mainstream understanding of nationalism. The main findings are summarised in the conclusion.

Defining nation and nationalism

The nation and nationalism, like other concepts in the social sciences, are deeply contested. Scholars across the social sciences—history, sociology, political science, anthropology, philosophy, and psychology—have provided a number of competing and diverse definitions of nation and nationalism, connoting different meanings in different contexts. Much of the ambiguity stems from scholars' approach to defining a nation and nationalism exclusively on the basis of objective or subjective factors or viewing them as purely political or cultural phenomena. Objective–subjective debate, revolving around what makes a nation a nation and how membership in a nation is determined, is conceptually significant since all other debates, such as debates about cultural and political nationalism, origins of nations and nationalism, and civic–ethnic dichotomy, cannot be understood without reference to and independent of the objective and

subjective markers that occupy a central place in these debates. First, cultural nations are associated with objective definitions, and cultural nationalism is conceptualised on the basis of objective elements, while political nations are related to subjective definitions, and political nationalism is defined on the basis of subjective factors. Second, the theories about the origins of nations and nationalism, such as primordialism and ethno-symbolism, place greater emphasis on the importance of objective factors in constituting a nation and see nationalism as a cultural phenomenon, while the special focus of modernism is on the subjective sense of belonging to a nation and considers nationalism as a political phenomenon. Third, the distinction between civic or political and ethnic or cultural nationalism is deeply embedded in subjective and objective factors respectively and broader debates about the origins of nations and nationalism and the relationship between political and cultural nationalism. Finally, objective and subjective elements also constitute an important part of analysis for new feminist, postcolonial and poststructuralist approaches to nationalism, but in a reflexive and non-essentialist sense, when they insist that objective elements and subjective sense of belonging to a nation are discursively constructed through discourses and argue for studying a nation and nationalism as contextual, contingent and particular categories. Thus, conceptually, all the debates about nations and nationalism are interrelated and mutually constitutive, and no one can be understood in isolation, as we will see in this paper.

Objective and subjective definitions

Objective definitions. The objective elements in defining nations include a common language, religion, history, customs, territory, and ethnicity. The proponents of objective definitions argue for these objective markers as the fixed criteria for determining membership in a nation. While defining a nation on the basis of objective elements, Joseph Stalin stated that "a nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture" (as cited in Franklin, 1973, p. 57). For Yoram Hazony (2018), nation refers to "a number of tribes with a common language or religion and a past history of acting as a body for the common defense and other large-scale enterprises" (p. 19). This means that a nation comes into existence only when a particular group of people has bonds of cohesion and mutual loyalty. The feeling of mutual loyalty is produced by a common language or religion and the "history of collaboration against common enemies" (p. 126). Objective definitions' focus on fixed objective criteria for the constitution of a nation is ridden with problems and is strongly challenged both on pragmatic and conceptual grounds. The main problem, among others, with objective definitions, is that no one is certain about which attributes a group of people must have to become a nation and what number of them. This problem is highlighted by Ernest Renan (1882/1996) by arguing: "how is it that Switzerland, which has three languages, two religions, and three or four races, is a nation, when Tuscany, which is so homogenous, is not one?" (p. 46). For Renan, it is the will of the group of people, not necessarily the objective factors, on the basis of which they form a nation. As he puts it: "the United States and England, Latin America and Spain speak the same language yet do not form a single nation. Conversely, Switzerland, so well made, since she was made with the consent of her different parts, numbers three or four languages" (p. 50). Following Renan, Bernard Yack (2012) argues: "there are a sufficient number of examples of multilingual nations—as well as nations divided by a common language—to bring into doubt the association of nations with linguistic

communities" (p. 74). Similarly, Michael Hechter (2000) and Florian Bieber (2020) point out that none of the objective elements necessarily generates national solidarity. What Renan points out and the majority of scholars embrace is that no nation satisfies all the objective criteria and, therefore, an attempt to define nations absolutely on the basis of objective markers lacks reliability and is "fundamentally misguided" (Ozkirimli, 2005, p. 17).

Subjective definitions. The subjective factors employed in the definition of nations consist of self-consciousness, attitudes, sentiments, solidarity, fidelity, and willpower. According to Renan (1882/1996), "a nation is… a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future" (p. 53). For Max Weber (1994), "a nation is a community of sentiment which could adequately manifest itself in a state of its own" (p. 25). Seton-Watson (1977) holds that "a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one" (p. 5). The subjective definitions emphasise that a nation comes into existence only when the members of a group become conscious of their identity and recognise each other as fellow citizens. As David Miller (1995) writes: "national communities are constituted by belief: nations exist when their members recognise one another as compatriots, and believe that they share characteristics of the relevant kind" (p. 22). Bieber (2020), too, argues that the choice of individuals to join or identify themselves with a nation and the acceptance of the same by the larger community are essential prerequisites for the constitution of a nation. For proponents of subjective definitions, objective elements are neither adequate nor absolute categories for the constitution of a nation, though they may play a role in generating the feeling of commonality. As Renan (1882/1996) states: "language invites people to unite, but it does not force them to do so…. Religion cannot supply an adequate basis for the constitution of a modern nationality either" (p. 50). Bieber (2020) reinforces this point of view and argues that objective markers "facilitate the subjective sense of belonging to a nation, but they are not necessary" (p. 8).

Although subjective definitions are widely embraced, they are neither final nor free from problems. They remain silent on what motivates the feeling of commonality and nationality (Ozkirimli, 2005). The second problem is what distinguishes a nation from other groupings possessing subjective elements too. This problem is highlighted by Craig Calhoun (1997) by arguing that "social solidarity and collective identity can exist in many sorts of groupings, from families to employees of business corporations to imperial armies. They are minimal conditions for calling a population a nation, but far from a definition" (p. 4). Thirdly, by regarding the creation and dissolution of nations as a product of individual or collective consciousness or choice, subjective criteria, argues Eric Hobsbawm (1992), "can lead the incautions into extremes of voluntarism" (p. 8).

To avoid the problems associated with objective and subjective definitions, some scholars define a nation as a combination of objective and subjective factors (Kellas, 1998; Tamir, 1993, 2019; Yack, 2012). According to Kellas (1998), "nations have 'objective' characteristics which may include a territory, a language, or common descent (though not all of these are always present), and 'subjective' characteristics, essentially a people's awareness of its nationality and affection for it" (p. 3). For Yael Tamir (1993), "a group is defined as a nation if it exhibits both a sufficient number of shared, objective characteristics- such as language, history, or territory- and self-awareness of its distinctiveness" (p. 66). For these scholars, only those who share certain objective characteristics recognise each other as compatriots; they feel commonality and nationality. The scholars' approach of defining a nation as a combination of objective and subjective factors fails to establish and fix a balance between the two and therefore causes the same problems associated with objective or subjective definitions.

Political and cultural definitions
Political definitions. Political definitions hold that nationalism is essentially a political phenomenon linked to the idea of self-determination or political autonomy (Anderson, 1983/2006; Breuilly, 1993; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1992; Hechter, 2000; Moore, 2001). As Ernest Gellner (1983) states:

> Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent…. there is a very large number of potential nations on earth. Our planet only contains room for a certain number of independent or autonomous political units (pp. 1–2).

Gellner further states that "nation/culture… cannot normally survive without its own political shell, the state" (p. 143). Benedict Anderson (1983/2006) makes a similar claim by defining a nation as "an imagined political community-- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (p. 6). Eric Hobsbawm (1992) also claims that "it is pointless to discuss nation and nationality except insofar as both relate to it [state]" (p. 10). For Margaret Moore (2001), "national identities… are political identities, connected to the political community with which one identifies, and cultural difference is not a crucial or even necessary element" (p. 14). The political definitions place emphasis on the identification between state and nation and the homogenisation of social, cultural, and ethnic elements of the population by the state. This means that they see nations as political communities and nationalism as political phenomenon. Among classical thinkers, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept of the general will, John Stuart Mill's liberal-civic conception of nation and nationalism, and Georg W. Friedrich Hegel's conceptualisation of the state as an ethical whole symbolise such a vision of the nation-state.

The political definitions are not satisfactory as they cause a number of problems. Firstly, by equating nationalism with the state, political definitions cause what Walker Connor (1978) describes as "terminological disease" (p. 378), making it difficult to distinguish between distinct terms like nation, nationalism, state, and nation-state. Secondly, nations sometimes exist without having their own states, nations and states are not absolutely identical, and the meaning of state is derived from the nature and purposes of nationhood (Canovan, 1996; Guibernau, 2013; Hazony, 2018; Lichtenberg, 1999; MacCormick (1999); Norman, 1999; Ozkirimli, 2005; Yack, 2012). As Bernard Yack (2012) states: "it is far from "pointless to talk about nations apart from the state", that there is a distinctive form of intergenerational community associated with the nation, one that does not depend on the state for its existence" (p. 96). Further, while challenging the assumption of congruence between political and national units, he argues that the state draws its legitimacy from the national community or nation to which it remains a servant and subordinate. Judith Lichtenberg (1999) argues along somewhat similar lines that "the argument for political rights such as statehood or autonomy rests on the premise of nationhood: groups demand states by arguing that they constitute nations" (p. 169). Thirdly, Anthony Smith (1986, 1998, 2009), as we will see in a moment, has vociferously criticised the proponents of political definitions for downplaying the cultural aspects of nationalism.

He contends that it is not possible to understand modern political nationalisms without reference to ethno-symbolic resources. Fourthly, by conceptualising a nation as an ethnically homogeneous community or a purely political community, the reliability and relevance of political definitions in multinational states or multi-ethnic nations come into question (Kymlicka, 1989; Miller, 1995; 2020; Parekh, 2000; Taylor, 1994; Tamir, 1993, 2019a). For these scholars, the process of creating a culturally homogeneous society from a multicultural society is not attractive and is bound to produce disastrous consequences as it is the cultural community to which individuals belong that defines their meanings and within which they make and reshape their goals and aims. What is evident is that political definitions are restrictive as they are not sensitive to cultural plurality and thus do not substantially take into consideration the cultural aspirations of such communities as national minorities, immigrants, indigenous peoples, and subnational groups.

Cultural definitions. Given the problems associated with political definitions, some scholars advocate cultural definitions of nation and nationalism, which define nations as 'cultures' and nationalism as the 'right to culture'. Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte are the key figures among the classical thinkers who argued for cultural definitions. Both Herder, the father of cultural nationalism, and Fichte emphasised the distinctness of national cultures with their emphasis on language, which they characterised as the epitome of people's unique historical memories and traditions and the central source of the national spirit. The cultural definitions conceptualise national identities as cultural identities rather than political identities and thus regard a nation as a cultural community, not necessarily a political community corresponding to a modern state. Yael Tamir (1993), a contemporary exponent of cultural definitions, has stated:

> The right to national self-determination… stakes a cultural rather than a political claim, namely, it is the right to preserve the existence of a nation as a distinct cultural entity…. National claims are not synonymous with demands for political sovereignty (p. 57).

She believes that the right to national self-determination is only about the right to culture and cannot be reduced to a set of civil rights and liberties. As she (1993) has argued:

> Members of national minorities who live in liberal democracies, like the Quebecois and the Indians in Canada, the Aborigines in Australia, or the Basques in France, are not deprived of their freedoms and civil liberties, yet feel marginalised and dispossessed because they are governed by a political culture and political institutions imprinted by a culture not their own (p. 72).

Walker Connor (1994), Will Kymlicka (1989), Bhikhu Parekh (2000), and Charles Taylor (1994) have made a similar claim by arguing that cultural groups, such as national minorities, immigrants, indigenous peoples and subnational groups, primarily aspire to fight for recognition and preservation of their cultural distinctiveness and essence, and thus are satisfied to settle for something less than an independent state. The cultural definitions advocate what Chaim Gans (2003) characterises as "non-state-seeking nationalism" (p. 25), a nationalism which he defines as that form of cultural nationalism "which at most regards state as desirable, but not as necessary" (p. 25). Tamir (1993) believes that the right to national self-determination, as the embodiment of the unique cultural essence of cultural groups and their right to develop their cultural distinctiveness, signifies that each national or cultural group, whether in majority or minority in a particular territory, is entitled to it, and national cultures are entitled to

political protection, not in the form of having an independent state for each nation. Rather, the right to national self-determination is to be realised as a more limited right within a state through mechanisms such as federalism, autonomous communities, consociational democracy, or through some form of political organisation that is not a nation-state. For Yoram Hazony (2018), who also defines nations in terms of objective elements and so sees nationalism as a cultural phenomenon, the establishment of stable and prosperous states is entirely dependent on the nation; as he argues: "mutual loyalty, which is derived from genuine commonalities of language or religion, and from a past history of uniting in wartime, is the firm foundation on which everything else depends" (p. 107). Social cohesion, stability and prosperity, he argues, exist only in a state that is constituted as what he calls a national state, "a nation whose disparate tribes have come together under a single standing government, independent of all other governments" (p. 80). On the other hand, non-national states lack the key element of social cohesion and are therefore bound to experience instability, ethnic conflicts, civil wars, and, ultimately, dissolution.

The cultural definitions are also ridden with problems. Some scholars (Brass, 1979; Calhoun, 1997; Eley and Suny, 1996; Hobsbawm, 1983, 1992) criticise them, particularly for playing down the role of the state vis-a-vis the formation of national identities and the role played by socio-political elites in constructing cultural identities. Calhoun (1997) holds that although long-existing cultural elements have made an influential contribution to materialising national identities, the process of state formation in the modern era has brought about a transformation in the meaning and form of cultural patterns and national identities. Eric Hobsbawm claims that it is the state which makes the nation and nationalism, not the other way round (1992), and the politics of what he calls the 'invention of tradition' occupies a central position in relation to understanding the nature of modern nations associated with and based on constructions and discourses (1983). Paul Brass (1979) makes a similar claim by arguing that ethnic and national identities are not given but rather the product of the politics of socio-political elites. As he (1979) puts it:

> The study of ethnicity and nationality…. is the study of the process by which elites and counter-elites within ethnic groups select aspects of the group's culture, attach new value and meaning to them, and use them as symbols to mobilise the group, to defend its interests, and to compete with other groups (pp. 40–41).

Given the restrictive nature of political and cultural definitions, some scholars (Calhoun, 1997; Dieckhoff, 2005; Delanty and Mohony, 2002; Eley and Suny, 1996; Ozkirimli, 2005; Wodak et al., 2009) see nations and nationalism as both political and cultural entities. According to Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (1996), "nationality is best conceived as a complex, uneven, and unpredictable process, forged from an interaction of cultural coalescence and specific political intervention, which cannot be reduced to static criteria of language, territory, ethnicity, or culture" (p. 8). Ozkirimli (2005) has made a similar claim, when he argues that "nationalism is not about culture or politics, it is about both. It involves the 'culturalization' of politics and the 'politicisation' of culture" (pp. 21–22).

Origins of nations and nationalism: the deep theoretical divisions. In the academic study of nationalism, three theories dominate the subject: primordialism, modernism, and ethnosymbolism. The primary focus of these theories is on the origins of nations and nationalism and the process of nation formation, about which they not only disagree but provide competing explanations.

Primordialism. Primordialism believes that nations and nationalism have been in existence since time immemorial. Primordialists regard nations as organic, immemorial, given, natural, eternal, ancestral, and historically situated entities. Smith (1986) has identified four versions of primordialism: organic, sociobiological, culturalist, and perennialism. The organic approach developed by such German romantics as Herder and Fichte focuses on the naturalness of nations. It regards a nation as an organic group and believes that a nation and nationalism are innate phenomena. The sociobiological approach, the main proponent of which is Pierre Van den Berghe, maintains that nations and ethnic groups are extensions of kinship groups and, thus, are of considerable antiquity. For Van den Berghe (1978), kinship sentiments make individuals maximise genetic reproduction within the group to achieve what he terms "inclusive fitness" through what he describes "nepotism or kin selection", a genetically based propensity to favour kin over non-kin. This approach regards nationalism as not an ethical but rather a biological phenomenon. The culturalist approach focuses on the importance of cultural givens to understand and explain the perpetual power of ethnicity and nationalism. Its leading exponents are Edward Shils (1957) and Clifford Geertz (1973), who claim that it is the primordial ties of family, language, blood, religion, race, custom, ethnicity, territory, and other cultural givens that hold nations together. For Shils and Geertz, these primordial ties and identities are natural and given, based on emotions and sentiments, and are ineffable and coercive, meaning that they are prior to social interactions and practices. Perennialism refers to that form of primordialism which, like other forms of primordialism, believes that nations are immemorial and of historical antiquity, but questions the claim of organic, sociobiological, and culturalist approaches that nations are given and natural phenomena. Against this claim of these forms of primordialism, perennialists treat nations as social, cultural and historical phenomena present in all periods of history with different shapes and recognise the change caused by forces of modernisation in ethnic and national identities. However, perennialists, such as Hugh Seton-Watson, Joshua Fishman, Donald Horowitz, Walker Connor and Adrian Hastings, have traced the origins of a number of European nations to the Middle Ages and mainly focus on the continuous impacts of immemorial ethnicity, meaning what Anthony Smith Smith (1998) describes that "Perennialists tend to derive modern nations from fundamental ethnic ties, rather than from the processes of modernisation" (pp. 223–224), and the French and American revolutions. As Seton-Watson (1977) has claimed that "the doctrine of nationalism dates from the age of the French Revolution, but nations existed before the doctrine was formulated" (p. 6). Similarly, Hastings (1997) has associated the emergence of nations and nationalism with the spread of Christianity in Europe. The perennialists thus believe in the historical continuity between immemorial ethnic communities and the nations of modernity and the modernity of nationalism.

Modernism. Modernism represents a theoretical critique of primordialist approaches to nations and nationalism. Modernists argue that, contrary to the primordialist position, nations and nationalism are by-products of the processes of modernisation like capitalism, bureaucratisation, democratisation, secularisation, centralisation, rationalisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, humanism, mobility, and modern state, and that they are modern, i.e., late 18th-century-Phenomena (Anderson, 1983/2006; Breuilly, 1993; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1983; Hechter, 1975; Kedourie, 1961; Nairn, 1981). They situate the genesis of nationalism in some social change, resulting in a transition from the pre-modern world to the modern one, and hold that the nation and nationalism have been invented against the backdrop of such transformation. Ernest Gellner (1983), a prominent

modernist theorist, for example, has identified three phases in human history, the hunter-gatherer, the agro-literate, and the industrial, and has situated the emergence of nationalism in the process of transformation from agro-literate to industrial society.

While differing on political, social, economic, and military aspects of modernity, modernists concur that nations are political communities, modern and deliberately created phenomena, and are based on social communication and citizenship. As Gellner (1983) has stated:

> Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent… political destiny are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: that is a reality… and in general an inescapable one (pp. 48–49).

Against the claim of primordialists that nations are extensions of and formed from historically rooted pre-modern ethnic communities, Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) has argued that it is nationalism that makes and produces nations, and he has termed this state as an "invented tradition". As he puts it:

> Israeli and Palestinian nationalism or nations must be novel, whatever the historic continuities of Jews or Middle Eastern Muslims, since the very concept of territorial states of the current standard type in their region was barely thought of a century ago, and hardly became a serious prospect before the end of World War 1 (pp. 13–14).

Benedict Anderson (1983/2006) makes a similar claim by seeing nations as imagined political communities. For him a nation "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6). He claims that it is what he calls print-capitalism that has primarily contributed to developing and creating this imagined project. As he argues: "the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation" (p. 46). It is to be noted that for Anderson, a nation is imagined, not imaginary. John Breuilly (1993) has associated the origins of nations with the modern centralised bureaucratic state.

Karl Deutsch's (1953) 'communication theory', Michael Hechter's (1975) and Tom Nairn's (1981) conceptions of nationalism as the product of 'internal colonialism' and 'uneven expansion of capitalism' respectively, Gellner's (1983) theory of cultural homogeneity associated with the process of industrialisation, Hobsbawm's (1983, 1992) and Anderson's (1983/2006) theorisation of nations and nationalism in terms of 'invented traditions' and 'imagined communities' respectively, Paul Brass's (1979) 'instrumental theory', and John Breuilly's (1993) conceptualisation of nationalism as a 'form of politics' constitute valuable contributions to the theory of modernism. The modernist theories developed by these thinkers lack homogeneous character because their focus is on distinct aspects of modernisation. As, for instance, the primary focus of Hechter and Nairn is on the economic aspects of modernisation, while that of Gellner and Anderson is on cultural aspects and that of Breuilly is on political aspects. However, all modernist theorists agree that both nations and nationalism are totally modern phenomena and that they are manufactured; as John Breuilly (2019) argues: "nationalism arises from modernity, not from prior nations, even if pre-modern nations have existed in some form" (p. 61).

Ethno-symbolism. Ethno-symbolism has evolved out of theoretical criticism against primordialist and modernist approaches. It is that theoretical approach that recognises the independent role and power of memories, myths, traditions, and symbols in the making, continuation and transformation of nations and nationalism (Smith, 1986, 1998, 2009). According to Anthony Smith (1998), the father of this approach, "ethno-symbolism aims to uncover the symbolic legacy of ethnic identities for particular nations, and to show how modern nationalisms and nations rediscover and reinterpret the symbols, myths, memories, values and traditions of their ethno-histories, as they face the problems of modernity" (p. 224). Its primary exponents are John Armstrong, John Hutchinson, and Smith. Against modernist theories, ethno-symbolism puts emphasis on analysing the phenomena of nations and nationalism over long historical time-spans beyond the specific period of modernity; the significance and independent role of what Smith terms "symbolic resources" and "ethnies" in the formation of modern nations; the reliance of elites on ethno-symbolic resources in relation to their project of mobilising the masses and fashioning national identities and ideologies; the interrelationship between national past, present and future in the form of recurrence, re-appropriation and continuity of ethnic elements which are cultural and symbolic in character; and the transformation of ethnicity into modern nationalism (Smith, 1986, 2009). Equally, ethno-symbolists reject the claim of organic, sociobiological, and culturalist forms of primordialism that nations are 'natural' and 'given' by arguing, in agreement with perennialists and modernists, that nations are cultural, social and historical phenomena situated in unique cultural and geo-historical settings (Smith, 1986, 2009). They also argue that, contrary to the perennialist position, pre-existing ethnic elements and cultures influence and fashion modernisation as much as they are fashioned by modernisation. As Smith (1986) asserts that "in rejecting the claims of the perennialists, due weight is accorded to the transformations wrought by modernity and their effects on the basic units of human loyalty in which we operate and live" (p. 13). Thus, ethno-symbolists represent a middle position between primordialist and modernist explanations, believing that nations and nationalism are modern phenomena; however, they have developed out of and on the basis of pre-modern ethnies. For Smith, nations are formed from ethnies or ethnic communities, but he recognises that the latter, following modernity, have experienced an ideological transformation and modern instrumentalization and have been transformed into modern nationalism.

Civic-ethnic dichotomy. One of the lively debates that occupy a central position in the study of nationalism is over the question of the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism (Brubaker, 2004; Larsen, 2017; Reeskens and Hooghe, 2010; Shulman, 2002; Tamir, 2019a), a distinction that is based on the twofold classification made first by Hans Kohn (1946) as Western and Eastern nationalism. Kohn has conceptualised the civic-ethnic dichotomy in terms of geographical areas by claiming that civic nationalism belongs to the West (Western Europe and the United States) while ethnic nationalism is to the East (Central and Eastern Europe and the whole third world). For Kohn (1946), Western nationalism, from a normative perspective, is "a rational and universal concept of political liberty and the rights of man, looking towards the city of the future" (p. 574), and Eastern nationalism is "founded on history, on monuments and grave-yards, even harking back to the mysteries of ancient times and of tribal solidarity" (p. 574). Based on his conceptualisation, civic or political nationalism is defined as a rational, liberal, progressive, inclusive, individualistic, and voluntaristic-oriented nationalism that sees the principle of self-determination as the right of each legal-political community with a set of equal rights and freedoms for all its members. On the other hand, ethnic or cultural nationalism is conceptualised as irrational, backward, regressive, coercive, exclusivist, and ethnocentric-oriented nationalism, which celebrates the primacy of cultural identity and national community over individual choice, freedoms, and rights. In other words, civic nationalism, as the epitome of the Enlightenment project of rationalism and individualism, is portrayed as that form of nationalism that recognises and celebrates the choice and will of each individual in relation to the nation to which he or she belongs, while ethnic nationalism, which is characterised as anti-individualist, closed and oppressive, is presented as that version of nationalism in which the nation to which each individual belongs by birth defines and fixes his or her choice and identity. Kohn has articulated a preference for Western civic nationalism against Eastern ethnic nationalism. Elie Kedourie (1961), Gellner (1983), Raymond Breton (1988), Liah Greenfeld (1993), Peter Alter (1994), George Schopflin (1996) and Michael Ignatieff (2006), among others, follow the same line of argument, claiming that civic nationalism is inclusive, liberal, progressive and voluntarist, and ethnic nationalism is exclusive, illiberal, destructive and ascriptive. Jurgen Habermas (1995) also argues for civic nationalism in his conceptualisation of "constitutional patriotism", signifying the necessity of developing a shared loyalty on the part of citizens of the state to the liberal democratic based-political and constitutional principles.

Such a conceptualisation of the civic-ethnic dichotomy is reductionist-oriented, misleading, ethnocentric in nature, theoretically weak and empirically problematic as it asserts that nations are purely non-cultural political communities; sees civic nationalism as the only good form of nationalism and the rest as bad forms of nationalism; considers the values of democracy and freedom as the inherent and sole property of civic nationalism; associates civic nationalism with the West and ethnic nationalism with the rest in a gross simple manner; and is biased towards universalistic claims of liberal ideology (Bieber, 2020; Brubaker, 2004; Calhoun, 1997; Dieckhoff, 2005; Gans, 2003; Gustavsson and Miller, 2020; Hutchinson, 2013; Hazony, 2018; Larsen, 2017; Miller, 2020; Nielsen, 1999; Reeskens and Hooghe, 2010; Shulman, 2002; Tamir, 2019a, 2019b; Yack, 2012). Against the civic–ethnic dichotomy, John Hutchinson (2013) has argued:

> Both nationalisms encouraged the rise of a civil society, of an educated citizenry engaged in a diversified 'public' sphere in which all could participate…. All nationalists appeal to the nation as historically determined and as moulded by human will (p. 76).

Criticising civic-ethnic distinction as "conceptually ambiguous, empirically misleading, and normatively problematic" (p. 5), Rogers Brubaker (2004) insists that glossily identified characteristics of Eastern ethnic nationalism form a part of Western nationalist politics as well and hence it is problematic and "impossible to hold an uncritical view of the essentially "civic" quality of West European nationalism" (p. 134). Furthermore, the logic of civic–ethnic distinction, like an ideology, is "to distinguish one's own good, legitimate civic nationalism from the illegitimate ethnic nationalism found elsewhere" (p. 134). This means that states or secessionist movements politically employ this distinction to legitimise their state nationalist policies or secessionist national projects by presenting them, as opposed to empirical realities, "to domestic and especially international audiences as paragons of civic inclusiveness and tolerance" (p. 134). Christian Albrekt Larsen (2017) argues, on the basis of data from 44 countries, that Kohn's distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism ignores "the within-country variation in perceptions of nationhood" (p. 13) and "lacks predictive power"

(p. 18) about the birth of nations. Yoram Hazony (2018) states that Britain, France and the United States are not civic societies but national states, and their strength and stability lie not in the assumed civic nature of these states but in the national state character they have. By claiming that all forms of nationalism, whether civic or ethnic, are grounded and formed on the basis of both civic and ethnic components, Bernard Yack (2012) has termed the civic-ethnic dichotomy as an ethnocentric, misleading and double-edged myth, encouraging "us to divvy up these two components of nationhood between two mutually exclusive models of association" (p. 44). Sharing the argument of Yack, Kai Nielsen (1999) has criticised civic nationalism as a "deceptive ideology" for regarding a nation as exclusively a political community independent of cultural components and orientation. According to Nielsen, "All nationalisms are cultural nationalisms of one kind or another. There is no purely political conception of the nation, liberal or otherwise" (1999, p. 127). Alain Dieckhoff (2005) argues along somewhat similar lines that what he terms "culture as a genuine resource" (p. 75) plays a significant role in the formation of a nation and legitimisation of a state's national political project, both in Eastern and Western regions of the world. Gina Gustavsson and David Miller (2020) also argue that "although it may be possible to encourage people to give … civic elements more prominence when thinking about their national identities, it seems unlikely that the cultural and ethnic elements will disappear, since it is precisely these features that most clearly distinguish one nation from another" (p. 13). Pointing out the empirical weakness in the civic–ethnic dichotomy, Stephen Shulman (2002), on the basis of using survey data from 15 countries, argues that civic components are present in Eastern European nationalism as well, and nationalisms in Western European societies are not entirely free from ethnic components:

> Overall, the data suggest that imperial and communist rule have not pushed Eastern European nationhood in a strongly cultural direction while greatly weaking civicness. And whereas most of the West has a long tradition of democracy and relatively strong and stable political institutions, cultural conceptions of nationhood are alive and well, and support for multiculturalism is relatively weak (p. 583).

In the same vein, Florian Bieber (2020) states that nations are not "permanently locked into this trajectory of "ethnic" versus "civic" nationalism. Rather, all nations have the two ideal types and oscillate between them over time" (p. 13). Yale Tamir (2019a) states that the civic-ethnic distinction is theoretically inaccurate and more normative than descriptive, aiming "to establish the moral supremacy of West" (p. 425). This makes present-day politics a victim of misguided expectations and dangerous policies tending to produce catastrophic consequences:

> The distinction assumes that ethnic conflicts are endemic to the East, encouraging us to ignore the spread of racial and ethnic tensions within presumed civic Western democracies, which include ethnic racial conflicts, the marginalisation of indigenous peoples…, and phenomena such as anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia. By waving the civic flag, Western democracies pretend to be more peaceful and inclusive than they really are, fostering a self-image that allows them to exonerate themselves, leaving them unprepared to deal with internal conflicts (p. 431).

She (2019b) further argues that the present political and social unrest is rooted "not only in an economic crisis but also in a crisis of identity for which the civic version of nationalism offers an insufficient, too abstract and legalistic answer" (p. 165).

Regarding the civic-ethnic dichotomy, one of the crucial issues of disagreement in nationalism studies is the nature of the relationship between nationalism and liberalism. One group of scholars regards nationalism as an inherently destructive, repressive, aggressive and preposterous force (Arendt, 1945; Acton, 1862; Hayek, 1982; Kedourie, 1961; King, 2007; Popper, 1966; Tagore, 1950). For this group, the phenomenon of nationalism is inimical to the values of democracy, prosperity, and individual rights and freedoms, as the former sacrifices the latter for the sake of the larger project of forming a nation and is the major cause of wars, genocide, moral corruption, and marginalisation of minority communities. Accordingly, Lord Acton (1862) has claimed that nationality is absurd and "is a confutation of democracy" (p. 25); Rabindranath Tagore (1950) has called nationalism "a great menace" (p. 67) and the nation "the greatest evil" (p. 17); Albert Einstein has characterised nationalism as "an infantile disease, the measles of mankind" (as cited in Isaacson, 2007, p. 386); Hannah Arendt (1945) has associated nationalism with "chauvinism" (p. 458); Martin Luther King, Jr. (2007) has denounced nationalism as a "false god" (p. 132); and Friedrich A. Hayek (1982) and Karl Popper (1966) have equated nationalism with tribalism and authoritarianism. Acton has asserted that "nationality does not aim either at liberty or prosperity…. It is a confutation of democracy, because it sets limits to the exercise of the popular will, and substitutes for it a higher principle" (p. 25). For Popper (1966), nationalism is against reason and free liberal society as it "appeals to our tribal instincts, to passion and to prejudice, and to our nostalgic desire to be relieved from the strain of individual responsibility which it attempts to replace by a collective or group responsibility" (p. 49). Kedourie (1961) also argues that "the essence of nationalism is that the will of the individual should merge in the will of the nation" (110). Some contemporary scholars, such as Arundhati Roy, follow the same line of argument, claiming that nationalism, as a destructive and dehumanising force, is highly inimical to the liberal democratic project and individual freedom all over the world. Roy (2003) thus argues that "flags are bits of coloured cloth that governments use first to shrink-wrap people's minds and then as ceremonial shrouds to bury the dead" (p. 47).

Another group of scholars sees nationalism as a progressive and liberating force, believing that it is compatible with liberal values of democracy, equality, and individual rights and freedoms (Greenfeld, 1993; Miller, 1995, 2020; Moore, 2001; MacCormick, 1982; Nielsen, 1999; Renan, 1882/1996; Tamir, 1993, 2019b). Moreover, this group argues that nationalism positively supports liberalism and the later needs the former to survive and provide public goods such as social justice, welfare, cultural identity, and peace in the contemporary world. As Tamir (2019b), who sees nationalism as an essential positive resource in contemporary society, states:

> It [nationalism] has given the twentieth century some of its finest hours and could become the saviour of the twenty-first century. The much-discussed crisis of modern democracies is inherently associated with the breakdown of this partnership [among nationalism, liberalism, and democracy]. Democracy cannot be restored as a purely utilitarian project, only as a national one—as a framework that provides meaning and reasons for mutual care and responsibility. Self-centred individualism must therefore be replaced with a more collectivist spirit that nationalism knows how to kindle (p. xvi).

Gustavsson and Miller (2020), like Tamir, also argue that nationalism (or 'nationality' as they call it), which they consider essential to the effective functioning of contemporary liberal democracies, "provides the 'cement' or 'glue' that holds modern,

culturally diverse, societies together and supports both democracy and social justice" (p. 3). This means that the realisation of the goal of social justice, which is a central component of contemporary liberalism, is dependent on social trust and solidarity "that only a common national identity can create at society-wide level" (Miller, 2020, p. 25). Andreas Wimmer (2018), too, contends that nation-building, conceptualised as the process of the formation of a political community, characterised by "political equality between ethnic groups" (p. 6), around a nation helps in preventing civil wars, bringing about peace and fostering economic development.

Beyond Meta-theorisation. From the late 1980s onwards, the study of nationalism has witnessed the germination of new approaches such as feminist, postcolonial, and poststructuralist approaches. All these approaches are deeply influenced by the philosophy of poststructuralism or postmodernism. Believing that everything in society is the product of social construction associated with power, poststructuralists argue that there is no scientific and neutral knowledge, no fixed and single meaning and explanation, and no universal and absolute truth. Instead, they see the world as unstable, contingent, indeterminate, diverse and ungrounded and therefore celebrate multiple realities, multiple experiences, multiple voices and multiple truths, relativism, and constructivism.

The new approaches question the central assumptions of conventional theories of nationalism—primordialism, modernism and ethno-symbolism—and insist on theorising the issues related to nations and nationalism beyond the methodology and epistemology of these mainstream theories. They, in particular, criticise them for focusing exclusively on the single issue of the origins of nations and nationalism at the cost of such related issues of nationalism as the question of women's identity, the world's cultural and political fragmentation, the plural nature of cultural identities, the nature of nationalism in colonial societies, the social engineering character of national identities, the discursive nature of nations and nationalism, and the worldwide violation of rights of national minorities, immigrants, indigenous peoples, and subnational groups, among others. By characterising mainstream theories as gender-blind, Eurocentric, reductionist-oriented, and anti-contextual, the new approaches focus on deconstructing these meta-theories to unearth the issues ignored by meta-theorisation.

Feminist scholars such as Kumar Jayawardena (1986), Cynthia Enloe (1989), Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (1989), Sylvia Walby (1996), and Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert (2013) have criticised the mainstream theorisation about nations and nationalism as gender-blind and hegemonic theorisation for ignoring the role of women in the creation of nations and the significance of gender relations in the understanding of the complex nature and functioning of nations and nationalism. Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert (2013) states that "discussions on nationalism have been primarily by men about men" (p. 806). For her, this is primarily due to three reasons: (a) the practice of placing greater emphasis on nationalism as a collective process; (b) the marginalisation of the specific role played by women in nation formation; and (c) the practice of seeing women as naturally subordinate to men. From the late 1980s onward, feminist scholars working on gender and nation have strongly challenged this trend. As Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (1989) have incisively pointed out that women play an instrumental role in the production, maintenance and reproduction of ethnic and national processes through the following five major activities:

(a) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities;

(b) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups;

(c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture;

(d) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences—as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories;

(e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles (p. 7).

Cynthia Enloe (1989), while analysing the relationship between gender and nationalism in colonised societies, argues that women have been used as instrumental categories both by colonialists to maintain their colonial rule and by nationalist movements to fight against colonialism and establish new nation-states on the basis of standards set by the male nationalists. She thus sees nationalism as a patriarchal institution whose values and structures are created and dominated by men at the cost of the lived experiences and personal identities of women. For Enloe, the end of colonialism has not led to the liberation of women from the meanings and identity created by nationalist movements about women since postcolonial nation-states, as patriarchal institutions are not interested in recognising and celebrating the lived experiences of women.

Following Enloe's conception of nationalism as a masculine project, Lene Hansen (2000), Begona Echeverria (2001), Patrizia Albanese (2006), Sikata Banerjee (2012) and Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert (2013) argue that national identities are constructed largely by men, and women are excluded, in a systemic way, from shaping the national projects or identities. This exclusionary and masculine character of nationalism causes the exclusion of women from formal politics and decision-making centres. Furthermore, it, through gendered national stereotypes and by according symbolic roles to women such as mothers of the nation, causes subordination of their individual interests or identities to the collective interest of the larger body of the nation. The sexual violence against women during conflicts and wars is also symbolically associated with the nation; as Thapar-Bjorkert (2013) contends that "rape constitutes an instrument of militarised, masculinised nationalism, and it is on women's body that the politics of the nation are mapped" (p. 811). All the above feminist scholars call for examining the ways gender intersects with sexuality, violence, religion, race, class, emotions, and other markers of national identity.

Representing the postcolonial approach, Homi Bhabha (1990) and Partha Chatterjee (1993), argue that, contrary to the West's conventional discourse of homogenous cultural identities or the West's Enlightenment project of universalism, national identities are deeply plural, fragmented and hybridised. Analysing the nature of anticolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa and criticising the mainstream theorisation of nationalism as Eurocentric, Chatterjee has incisively disputed Benedict Anderson's notion of the modular influence of European nationalism. For Chatterjee (1993), Asian and African nationalisms, which according to him were based "on a difference with the "modular" forms of the national society propagated by the modern West" (p. 5), were not entirely derivative of and modelled on European nationalism. Although Asian and African nationalist elites, he asserted, were deeply influenced by Western discourses and practices on nation and nationalism, they adapted and indigenised them in accordance with their unique cultures, economies, intellectual traditions, political systems, geographies, and histories. He explains this by categorising the realm of social institutions and practices into two domains: the inner, 'spiritual' domain, a native domain over which Asian-African nationalist elites have dominance; and the 'material' outer domain, a domain over which the West and the colonial state have superiority. He argues that, contrary to the conventional theorisation that nationalism in colonial societies has begun with their anticolonial

political movements, 'spiritual', cultural nationalism, with which postcolonial nationalism begins, "creates its own domain of sovereignty within colonial society well before it begins its political battle with the imperial power" (1993, p. 6). The inner, 'spiritual' domain constituted a part of the originality of the anticolonial nationalisms in Asia and Africa. It was a vital centre of anticolonial resistance outside and independent of the 'material' outer domain, which consisted of colonial state apparatus and a derivative political nationalism. Thus, the nationalist elites in Asia and Africa, according to Chatterjee, have not simply imitated the nationalist ideas of European nationalism, but indigenised and adapted them within their distinct socio-economic contexts. This created a new domain for nationalist elites to develop, outside the confines of the colonial state, non-Western notions of religion, family, gender relations, literature, and other aspects of Afro-Asian societies that are modern and at the same time non-Western.

Postmodernist approaches see nations and nationalism as essentially narrative and discursive formations and argue that social identities are always constructed through a dialectical relationship with other identities, meaning that identities are mutually constitutive and internally unstable, indeterminate and incomplete. Contesting the narrative that ethnicity and nation are natural, given and independent phenomena, Etienne Balibar (1991), Immanuel Wallerstein (1991) and Stuart Hall (1991) argue that they are historically constructed categories whose meanings are based on power relations within particular situations and defined in relation to other forms of identity such as gender and class. They contend that because ethnicity and nation are socially situated, their meanings are malleable, mutable, changeable and contextual, and thus lack a stable centre or single, universal presence. For Balibar, ethnicity exists only in the form of a discourse of what he calls "fictive ethnicity" (1991, p. 96), a conceptual category that for him is not simply fiction but represents that an ethnic or national community is socially constructed, through the medium of language and race, in such a way that we assume it as a natural phenomenon. He has stated:

> No nation possesses an ethnic base naturally, but as social formations are nationalised, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized—that is, represented in the past or in the future as if they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions (1991, p. 96).

Sharing the position of Balibar, Hall argues:

> We have the notion of identity as contradictory, as composed of more than one discourse, as composed always across the silences of the other, as written in and through ambivalence and desire. These are extremely important ways of trying to think an identity which is not a sealed or closed totality (1991, p. 49).

Rogers Brubaker (1996), while examining the structural characteristics and modus operandi of nationalist politics in post-communist Europe and Eurasia, has differentiated the concept of a nation from the concepts of nationhood and nationness on the basis of his reasoning to understand the nature and dynamics of a nation from a practical perspective. He has criticised the mainstream theorisation on nationalism (primordialism, modernism, and ethno-symbolism) as "analytically dubious" (p. 21) for seeing nations as real, essentialist entities and for adopting what he calls a developmentalist approach to the nation, which implies that nations grow, develop, and exist in a consolidated and stabilised manner. He states that "nationalism

can and should be understood without invoking "nations" as substantial entities" (p. 7), meaning that the nation should not be treated as a reified entity intrinsically manifested in nationalism. For Brubaker, the central problem in mainstream theorisation is that it sees nations as a category of analysis inherently incarnated in the practice of nationalisms. This approach precludes "alternative and more theoretically promising ways of conceiving nationhood and nationness" (p. 15). The nation, he argues, is to be seen as a category of practice, and only nationhood and nationness are the real categories of analysis, which constitute a variable property of individual and group actions and which are something that does not develop but something that happens. To understand the logic, heterogeneity and real strength of nationalism, the complex reality of nationhood, diverse nationalist discourses and practices, and the protean, unstable and contextual character of nationness, Brubaker states:

> We should focus on nation as a category of practice, nationhood as an institutionalised cultural and political form, and nationness as a contingent event or happening, and refrain from using the analytically dubious notion of "nations" as substantial, enduring collectivities… the analytical task at hand… is to think about nationalism without nations (1996, p. 21).

Similarly, Brubaker and Cooper (2000) and Brubaker (2004) question the mainstream's theoretical approach of seeing the concepts of ethnicity, nation, race and other identity-related concepts as essential, substantial entities. For Brubaker, these categories are fluid, polymorphous and contingent and, therefore, should not be treated as reified entities with stable, essentialising character. Instead, these categories should be conceptualised "in terms of practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organisational routines, institutional forms, political projects, and contingent events" (2004, p. 11).

Katherine Verdery (1996), contrary to the essentialist, stable and fixed conception of a nation, sees a nation as a symbol whose meanings, as defined by the symbolic, social, economic and political context, vary from context to context. For her, the modern state, through its totalising nationalist discourses and practices, produces and reproduces symbol nation and assigns meanings to it representing homogeneity and differentiation associated with ethnicity, class, race, locality, or gender. The state-created homogeneity and differences, which represent a process of exclusion, constitute a source of strength for the modern state and legitimise its existence and necessity in modern life. However, the states' homogenisation processes, she argues, do not have a uniform character but are deeply shaped by the contexts in which the states make homogenising efforts. Thus, nationalism, "as a political utilisation of the symbol nation" (p. 227), has multiple meanings and a nation is not a substantial entity but a political fiction.

Craig Calhoun (1997, 2007), against the conventional theories' approach of defining nations as essential and reified entities, conceptualises nationalism as a discursive formation. For Calhoun, a nation comes into existence when its members consider themselves a nation. It is the discourse of nationalism, he argues, that plays a significant role in the production of collective identity, social solidarity and nationalist self-understandings among the people, but in an indeterminate and non-essentialist way. He criticises what he calls a reductionist approach to explain the diverse nationalisms that exist at the level of practical activity in terms of a single "master variable" (p. 21), be it ethnic identities, industrialisation, bureaucratisation, unequal economic development, state, or ressentiment. These forces help to explain the contents of specific nationalisms, but owing to multiple

sources of nations, "they do not explain the form of nation or nationalist discourse itself" (p. 21), and a single explanatory variable is unable to capture the commonalities of many diverse nationalisms. It is the discourse of nationalism that connects different collectives, ideologies, movements, cultural patterns and policies and shapes all of them. "What is general", he states, "is the discourse of nationalism. It does not completely explain any specific… activity or event, but it helps to constitute each through cultural framing" (p. 22). This suggests that a single, universal theory of nationalism is not possible:

> Nationalism is too diverse to allow a single general theory to explain it all. Much of the content and specific orientation of various nationalisms is determined by historically distinct cultural traditions, the creative actions of leaders, and contingent situations within the international order. What can be addressed in more general, theoretical terms are the factors that lead to the continual production and reproduction of nationalism as a central discursive formation in the modern world (p. 123).

Calhoun's scepticism towards a general theory of nationalism does not mean that a theory is not necessary but represents that multiple theories are needed to understand diverse forms of nationalism.

Alan Finlayson and Ronald Grigor Suny argue along somewhat similar lines that discourses are central to the formation of nations and understanding the complexity of nationalism. Finlayson (1998) argues for conceptualising nations and nationalism as specific phenomena through a discourse analysis approach to uncover the specific content of individual nationalisms obscured by totalising or universal explanations of nationalism. Considering that "no two nationalisms can be same" (p. 100), he insists that each national community is the by-product of a political-ideological discourse constructed and articulated in a specific context with a specific meaning and deployed to legitimise the totalising political projects of specific ideologies by associating them "with the apparently 'natural' nation" (p. 100). This means that "nationalism is not a matter of history, sociology or philosophy but always a matter of politics" (p. 117) and that nations and nationalism are not given, fixed, stable, and unitary phenomena but are variegated phenomena with particularity as their defining feature. Suny (2001), while examining the pattern of the formation of national identities in the post-Soviet republics, argues that nations are created through narratives, associated in particular with the construction of histories, which present nations as essential and reified entities. The national narratives or discourses, through teaching, reproduction and repetition, make people embrace nation and national identities as immemorial, singular, given, fixed and internally harmonious when, in fact, narratives do so by concealing "the fractures, divisions, and relations of power within the nation" (p. 871).

Ruth Wodak, et al. (2009), while arguing in favour of the discursive construction of national identities, also state that nations and national identities are produced and reproduced through discourses and that there is no singular and fixed national identity or a single vision of nation. Rather, there are multiple national identities that "are discursively constructed according to context, that is according to the degree of public exposure of a given utterance, the setting, the topic addressed, the audience to which it is addressed, and so on" (pp. 186–187). By this, they mean that, contrary to the essentialist position of nations, discursive national identities are dynamic, contradictory, ambivalent, unstable, and fragile. Similarly, Filiz Coban Oran (2022), while examining the nature of national identity in Turkey and the pattern of nationalist politics in post-Kemalist Turkey,

contends that there has not been a specific Turkish nationalism. Rather, there are many diverse and competing Turkish nationalisms "which imagine different Turkeys" (p. 5), such as a secular Turkey and a Muslim Turkey, by discursively producing, dismantling and reproducing Turkey's national identity associated with power.

Amanda Machin (2015), who conceptualises nation and nationalism in terms of Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of language games, argues that, contrary to the claims of primordialism, modernism and ethno-symbolism, the meanings of nation and nationalism, as socially and historically constructed categories, are malleable, flimsy and protean with no essential meanings and stable centre at all. As a result, a single, universal explanation of nation and nationalism is not possible because it diminishes their power and obscures their "lack", which "contains what we are missing and endlessly seeking" (p. 3), by silencing their multiplicity and diversity of meanings. For him, the power and strength of nation and nationalism lie in the contestation over their meanings and nature, and this contestation has the capacity to strengthen the roots of democracy. As he puts it:

> It is actually in the lack of any final definition that the power of the nation resides. But it is also this that fills it with democratic potential. For it allows for the ongoing possibility for questioning the nation's dominant meanings. Reviving the contestation over the question of 'who are we?' could, possibly, reinvigorate democracy (p. 3).

Machin thus argues for the encouragement and celebration of the contestation of nation and nationalism.

The new approaches to nationalism share that nations and nationalism are not absolute categories but historically and socially constructed categories and contingent events. second, they are less interested in the origins of nationalism and its historical evolution and more interested in its everyday existence or, to put it another way, they are more interested in the process of nation-building and in how national identities are constructed, articulated, represented, narrated and performed in everyday life. Finally, new approaches focus on dismantling the totalising and essentialising claims of meta-theories of nationalism associated with the Enlightenment project of universalism.

Conclusion

The paper has provided an overview of existing literature on nation and nationalism relating to debates and disputes about the meaning of nation and nationalism, their origins, and their nature and scope. Central to these debates, as an overview of literature, has suggested, lie a number of key questions: Whether nations are to be defined objectively or subjectively; whether nations make states and nationalism or the case is the other way around; whether nation and nationalism are political or cultural phenomena; whether they are modern phenomena or the extension of pre-modern ethnic communities; whether they are progressive or destructive forces; whether they are compatible with or diametrically opposed to the multiple values of democracy, equality, liberty, justice, and prosperity; whether non-western regions adopted them in the same form in which they emerged in the western world or adapted them in agreement with their unique contexts; and is nationalism about creating homogeneity in society and thereby devaluing differences, or about recognising and celebrating those differences? In this article, an overview of these debates has suggested a series of important things. First, the academic journey of nationalism has reached a stage where the current consensus is that nations are socially constructed and historically contingent phenomena, and the current focus of the scholarship is on looking at the intersection between the cultural

and political aspects of nationalism. Second, nations and nationalism are not absolute, singular, fixed, and unitary phenomena but possess a multifaceted character with particularity, subjectivity, and relativity as their defining features. They carry multiple and diverse meanings depending on who is using them in what context and with what orientation. Therefore, a single, universal explanation of nationalism is neither feasible nor morally desirable. Third, to understand the multiplicity and diversity of nations and nationalism and the ways in which elements of this multidimensionality intersect, it is necessary to treat them as open-ended, unstable, dispersed, protean, particular, and contingent phenomena. Finally, deep contestation constitutes a source of power and strength for nations and nationalism as it can broaden and expand their sphere and scope by offering opportunities for exploring and analysing their multifaceted character and changing realities in the contemporary world.

Data availability

The author declares that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article and have been properly cited. However, no separate datasets were generated or analysed for this article.

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Competing interests

Ethical approval

Informed consent

Additional information