Nations and Nationalism

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Symposium on *The Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism*

John Breuilly[1] | Cathie Carmichael[2] | Matthew D'Auria[3] | Aviel Roshwald[4] | Eric Storm[5]

[1]The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK | [2]School of History, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK | [3]School of History and Art History, Norwich Research Park, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK | [4]Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., USA | [5]Universiteit Leiden, Leiden, The Netherlands

Correspondence: Eric Storm (h.j.storm@hum.leidenuniv.nl)

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ABSTRACT

This symposium consists of two critical reviews of *The Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism* by Eric Storm and John Breuilly, followed by a response to those critiques by the editors of the two volumes.

Cathie Carmichael, Matthew D'Auria and Aviel Roshwald (eds.). 2023. *The Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism, Volume I Patterns and Trajectories over the Longue Durée, Volume II Nationalism's Fields of Interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 486 pp., 820 pp., £200 (hdb).

1 | Eric Storm: The Curse of Historicism: A World History of Nationalism Beyond the Pitfalls of Methodological Nationalism and Continentalism?

The clash between modernists and anti-modernists still flares up now and then in the field of nationalism studies. *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Nationalism* (2013), edited by John Breuilly, took the modernist interpretation for granted and basically discussed the global rise of nationalism from the Age of Revolution until the end of the twentieth century. Cathie Carmichael, Matthew D'Auria and Aviel Roshwald now counter with *The Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism*, which has a strong focus on the pre-modern era. The editors justify their choice by arguing that recent historical investigations have questioned the Western origins of nationalism, the neat division between modernity and pre-modernity and the role of secularism in modern societies. Therefore, their aim is to provide a fresh comparative view on the closely linked phenomena of 'politicised ethnicity, national consciousness and nationalism'. This way, they hope to provide a more nuanced empirical view on the stale debate between modernists and anti-modernists. Thus, without being dogmatic the editors clearly sympathise with the anti-modernist position—particularly Anthony Smith's ethnosymbolist approach—asserting that nationalism 'draws on and adapts sentiments of kin-culture affinity that appear quasi-universal' (Vol I, p. 2–3). With this goal in mind, the editors have selected 56 of the most prominent scholars in the field and their contributions are almost without exception excellent, while providing myriad new insights. Before pointing at some limitations of the *Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism*, I will briefly discuss its setup and strengths.

The first volume of the *Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism* consists of 20 chronological chapters. Some of the contributions on more recent periods have a global reach, but most focus on a specific area, such as Spanish America (Jaime E. Rodríguez) or nineteenth-century Europe (Joep Leerssen), while others examine developments in one realm, such as Ancient China (Yuri Pines) or the Holy Roman Empire (Len Scales), or even one particular event, such as the American Civil War (Susan-Mary Grant). The second volume contains fourteen chapters that analyse one particular imperial context, such as the Ottoman sultanate (Ebru Boyar) or the British Empire (Krishan Kumar), while the remaining 22 essays have a thematic approach, for instance, dealing with the relationship

between nationalism and Buddhism (Matthew J. Walton), self-determination (Alain Dieckhoff), warfare (John Hutchinson), tourism (Eric G.E. Zuelow) or historiographies and commemorative practices (Stefan Berger).

Apparently, the editors did not provide very strict guidelines to the authors, enabling them to make their own choices and put their own emphasis. The editors themselves wrote fascinating, if rather limited case studies. Thus, Matthew D'Auria produced a chapter on Europe's quest for national origins during the eighteenth century, which is largely based on primary source research. Aviel Roshwald compares the role of patriotism in three occupied countries during the Second World War—the Netherlands, Vichy-France and Thailand—while Cathie Carmichael studies the impact of racial thought in the Western Balkans by focusing on debates about the 'Dinaric race'. Although a few authors wrote a similarly focused chapter, such as Gabriele Haug-Moritz's contribution on national identities in Reformation France and Germany (using primary sources like D'Auria), most authors provided a quite ambitious survey of their particular topic, based primarily on secondary studies. Often they follow Roshwald's example by studying a number of specific cases in greater detail. Thus, Peter Scholliers's chapter on 'Foodways and Nationhood' illustrates his more general remarks with a detailed analysis of the nationalisation of cooking practices in Belgium, Japan, Nigeria and Russia.

As already mentioned, a specific feature of the Cambridge History is its strong focus on pre-modern ethnic/national identities. No fewer than nine chronological chapters deal with the period before the Age of Revolution, ranging from Steven Grosby's chapter on the Ancient Middle East to D'Auria's essay on eighteenth-century Europe. Moreover, several other authors also start their thematic or geographical chapters in the medieval or early modern periods. Nonetheless, these chapters do not all subscribe to the ethnosymbolist proclivities of the editors. Grosby sticks to his perennial interpretation—arguing that nationalism has always existed—while many of the other authors appear to subscribe to a (moderate) modernist position. Thus, Tuong Vu's contribution on 'The imperial origins of nations in Indochina' or Emma Hunter's text on 'African nationalisms' provide very nuanced interpretations of pre-modern identity formation, while clearly showing how the transition to modern forms of nationalism brought profound changes. John Breuilly's review provides a more detailed critique of the inconsistencies of the volumes' *longue durée* approach. Nevertheless, in general, these chapters provide a fascinating picture of processes of territorial identity construction, before, during and after the rise of modernity.

In addition to highlighting recent insights relating to a broad array of historical eras and thematic fields, the book provides a range of innovative chapters on the evolution of nationalism within imperial settings. Scholars such as Berger and Miller (2015), Fradera (2018) and Malešević (2017) have recently argued that nation-states and empires were not total opposites. Hybrid states, such as imperial nation-states or nationalising empires, dominated the international arena during the nineteenth and large parts of the twentieth century. One implication of this is that the substitution of traditional empires by modern nation-states was far from inevitable. The chapters by Bálint Varga on the Habsburg monarchy or by Eric T. Jennings on the French Empire prove that such a perspective can shed new light on well-researched topics. Varga argues that modern forms of cultural nationalism replaced older patriotic traditions based on territorial loyalties. The emergence of pan-German and Czech nationalist movements during the nineteenth century, for instance, fundamentally undermined a shared Bohemian patriotism. Similarly, Jennings shows that in the 1950s, many West-African politicians preferred autonomy within a larger French federation, occupying a position similar to Britanny in France, rather than pressing for national independence that would leave them in a vulnerable economic and geopolitical position.

The Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism also has a number of weaknesses. In places the content seems conventional and even dated. Thus, the role of women, gender issues and the LGBTQ+ community is very limited and only receives explicit treatment in Joane Nagel's thematic chapter on 'Gendered Nations'. Indigenous populations are even almost entirely ignored. In addition, the global aspects of the two volumes can be questioned. Nationalism has been researched primarily within national historiographical traditions and along continental lines (see, for instance, Hamnett 2017; Kingston 2017; Hastings 2019; Neuberger 2023), which has resulted not just in problematic forms of methodological nationalism but also of methodological continentalism. Recently, nonetheless, various authors have shown the entangled nature of nationalism across the globe (Cooper 2014; Polasky 2015; Sivasundaram 2020; Storm 2024).

The editors explicitly mention the problem of methodological nationalism and the related 'empirical internalism' of the nation-by-nation case study in their introduction. They aim to overcome methodological nationalism by promoting transnational and comparative approaches (Vol I, p. 4). Nonetheless, their own book does not fully succeed in avoiding the trap of methodological nationalism. Throughout the volumes there is a strong focus on prominent nationalist movements and existing nation-states. Moreover, by including a number of geographical chapters, while leaving authors relatively free to determine their own focus, many—by adhering to the historicist impulse that is ingrained in the historical discipline—primarily focus on internal developments of a 'self-identical subject', while emphasising the unique features of their particular area or case (Berger 2015; Simon 2019). Even many of the thematic chapters deal with a limited number of (isolated) national cases. As relatively few authors explore transnational patterns and global trends, the overall impression is one of strong national differences and exceptional paths.

Although the editors explicitly reject the Eurocentric focus of most existing studies, they have not fully succeeded in escaping this pitfall either. Most of the chronological and thematic chapters deal principally with Europe, and only in the part on imperial and postcolonial settings is there an attempt to cover the entire world. Australia and the Pacific, however, do not have a separate chapter and are only mentioned briefly in some of the contributions. Moreover, in the chronological first volume, developments in the Western world during the period from 1500 to the present are discussed in nine chapters, while 'the rest' only gets four. The dominant position of Europe also becomes clear in many thematic contributions. One example of this—the

chapter on nationalism and music by Rutger Helmers—is limited to Europe by the topic: 'Opera and Classical Music in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century'. While this is undeniably a first-rate contribution, a focus on folk or pop music would have facilitated a more global perspective.

Most contributions deal with one continent or sub-continent only, thus implicitly succumbing to a form of methodological continentalism. This implies that each continent receives its own focus in terms of both periodisation and subject matter. Antiquity is dealt with in chapters on the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Some Asian countries, especially China, are projected into a very distant past, while Asia is also discussed extensively during the decolonisation era. Europe enters the stage in the late medieval era and retains a prominent role until the present. The chapters on the Americas primarily deal with the Atlantic Revolution and the nineteenth century, whereas Africa only enters the picture in the twentieth century. The thematic focus also varies per continent. Authors dealing with Europe primarily discuss the evolution of culturally defined nations and ethnic minorities, while in the rest of the world, the role of states is more important. The chapters on the Americas, moreover, pay considerable attention to racial forms of exclusion, while Asia is often associated with religion, such as Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism. Africa in turn is primarily viewed through the prism of anti-colonial nationalism. This way, it becomes almost impossible to discern global trends or make meaningful transcontinental comparisons.

Another serious limitation is that the two volumes almost totally ignore the post 1945 period. This seems at least partly due to a conscious decision of the editors. The last chronological chapter by Anna von der Golz deals with 1968, and only a few authors touch upon the period of decolonisation and the Cold War. Many authors of a thematic chapter also prefer exploring the long-term historical evolution of their topic to discussing its relevance for the present. Frank Bösch's contribution on 'Media and Nationalism' is characteristic: His overview begins in the late Middle Ages with the invention of the printing press and continues up to the early decades of the television era, with the primary focus throughout on Europe and the United States. Only in the final sentences of the conclusion does the author hint at the nationalising influence of the internet and social media.

This means that the two volumes barely touch on the prominent role of nationalism in today's world and are of limited use to social scientists and others whose focus is on the present. The book totally ignores the resurgence of nationalism as a consequence of the globalisation of the world since the 1980s, the rise of neoliberalism (Thatcher and Reagan are not even mentioned) and identity politics, the role of nation-branding or the impact of social media. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia is hardly mentioned nor is the genocide in Rwanda. Omar Bartov's thematic chapter on 'Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide' is a case study of the mass killings of Jews in Eastern Galicia during the Second World War. Most striking is the omission of a chapter on the relationship between nationalism and (right-wing) populism, which is so prominent in today's world

This neglect of recent developments in favour of the long historic 'roots' of nationalism and in many ways a traditional focus also has implications for the content. The book is rather weak on the crucial phenomenon of banal nationalism, which has become so important after 1945. As Billig (1995) has shown, by becoming ingrained (and banalised) in everyday life nationalism has become taken for granted and can easily be activated in times of crisis. Thematic chapters that, according to the editors, focus on banal forms of nationalism mostly discuss mundane but quite conscious and even hot forms of nationalism: tourism, commemorations, ethnic foods, national music and media. As a consequence, the volumes barely shed new light on the fundamental question of why nationalism has become such a pervasive belief system in today's world (Malešević 2019; Storm 2020). Hence, even though most chapters are certainly well-worth reading, *The Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism* does only provide a very patchy new interpretation of the world history of nationalism. As a consequence, there is still ample room for future historians to challenge methodological continentalism and to focus more on global trends and transnational patterns, while linking past developments to the present.

2 | John Breuilly: The Ever Expanding Field of Nationalism Studies

2.1 | Introductory Remarks

Eric Storm has sketched out the structure of these volumes, broadly characterised its contents, and commented on some chapters. I will seek to avoid duplication. He has also made some general criticisms on which I will comment as they relate to difficulties encountered by editors of such books, including myself (Breuilly 2013).

The first concerns 'methodological nationalism', to which Storm adds the term 'continentalism'. No single historian can write about nationalism in detail and 'globally' because of lack of sufficient expertise.[1] I sought to overcome a national approach to nationalism by asking authors to write comparatively about a few cases. Even then, these cases had to be clustered geographically and chronologically to accommodate the author's expertise.

Second, Storm criticises the relatively small amount of recent and contemporary history. I agree with Storm's point that "... the two volumes barely touch on the prominent role of nationalism in today's world and are of limited use to social scientists and others whose focus is on the present." However, that is in the nature of the difference between historical studies and present-oriented social sciences. Historians need evidence and perspective rarely available for very recent events. Nevertheless, there could be more on at least what Eric Hobsbawm called "the short 20th century" (which he equated with the life of the USSR), when one can and should write knowledgeably about nation and nationalism

Third, Storm criticises 'Eurocentrism'. This concerns more than the 'methodological nationalism/continentalism' issue, namely, the debate between 'modernists' and 'non-modernists', which figures prominently in these two volumes. The modernist approach to nationalism tends to be 'Eurocentric'. This

was clear in the seminal books first published in 1983 by Gellner (2006) and Anderson (1991). Anderson located his first cases in South America but stressed that these were creole movements, responses of Spanish-origin settlers to Spanish imperialism. This also applies to the movements leading to US independence. Indeed, many historians have argued that only following independence did a distinct sense of national identity form (Doyle and Van Young 2013.) 'Eurocentrism' is grounded in the argument that the modern transformations, which shape nationhood and nationalism, whether 'print capitalism' (Anderson), 'industrialism' (Gellner) or something else, originated in western Europe and spread from there. Generally it is non-modernists who take a more 'global' view as is clear in I/1.[2]

2.2 | Nationhood and Nationalism Over the *Longue Durée*

The editors in their short postscript to this section of the book refer to this debate, expressing support for non-modernists who argue that ethnonational identity can have long historical roots, which in turn can shape modern nationalism. One would therefore expect such views to be prominent in the first volume, 'Patterns and Trajectories over the *Longue Durée'*, especially I/1 on 'classical civilisations'. However, as Storm also notes, only one chapter—Grosby on the 'Ancient Near East'—explicitly takes a non-modernist approach. The other five variously stress the 'fluid' (Pines) and 'meagre' (Scales) nature of ethnic concepts in the various polities considered, with most emphasising the modernity of nationalism and nationhood. Gruen makes a similar point about Greek and Roman concepts of nationhood, and even about the Jewish case, where generally one finds the strongest advocates of ancient nationhood (As in the chapter by Gal in volume 2.). Scales notes a 'German' quality to the medieval Holy Roman Empire but highlights its fluid, fluctuating and elite nature. Pines considers China as a 'civilisation', expressing scepticism about the usefulness of the concept of 'nation'. Such scepticism also inform the arguments of the chapters on South-East Asia and India, if less explicit, although here a notion of 'politicised ethnicity' is put to fruitful use. However, I cannot see either how similar or connected this notion is to modern nationhood, beyond being selectively appropriated by nationalist ideologies.

Already these chapters make clear the need to distinguish concepts of nationhood from those of nationalism. Nationhood is about a shared sense of identity. Where this is lacking, nationhood has no meaning. Nationalism refers to the ideology of a political movement. One could argue—as many historians have—that nationalist writers or elite political movements seek to create the very sense of identity we might call nationhood. Conversely, nationhood might be sufficiently secure, widely shared and taken for granted so as not to 'need' a nationalist project. These six chapters are mainly about nationhood, usually meaning an elite sense of politicised ethnicity. The available sources (often confined to stone inscriptions, sometimes extending to fiscal and other administrative records and very occasionally literary texts) rarely enable well-founded accounts about figures other than rulers, state officials and priests, and even then not in any circumstantial or continuous way.

2.3 | Nationalism Reshapes the Modern World

It is in the next two sections that one would expect such accounts. Here, the volumes echo the development of 'nationalism studies', principally from the late 1980s, following those books by Anderson and Gellner, and in response to the collapse of European communist regimes.[3] After the initial concern with 'when' was the nation came, the study of the spread of nationalism across the world: largely the province of I/2: 'Paradigm Shifts and Turning Points in the Era of Globalisation: 1500 to the Present', and II/1: 'Imperial and Post Colonial Settings'.[4]

Herzog considers how creole elites in Spanish America framed nationality as demands for civic rights. When opposed by Spain this shifted to demands for independence, but these were barely grounded in notions of national identity. Haug-Moritz contrasts an early modern French equation of nation and monarchy against a German separation, but that seems to do with France consisting of one monarchy and Germany of many. Grant's essay on the American Civil War contrasts a cultural aspect to nationality in the Confederacy against a more political, civic one in the Union, something closely related to the difference between a free labour and a slave culture. Many essays—some extending into the early 20th century—identify different oppositions to the existing state, only some of which were 'national'. Crossley argues that nonnational identities asserted against the Qing dynasty were only later taken up by national movements.

Kennedy and Goebel, writing about opposition movements in overseas British and French empires, respectively, highlight their diversity and fluidity, often preferring imperial reform to independence. Indeed, such reform demands could stress cultural distinctiveness more than independence. Vermeiren argues something similar in his essay on the First World War. Only following defeat for the central powers was there a clear shift to demands for national independence, drawing on support from the two new world powers, the USSR and United States.

Post-1918 independence movements beyond Europe largely failed. Success instead came after 1945—as James shows in her essay on decolonisation—when those two powers expressed the same principled support, though identifying the national unit in territorial rather than ethnic terms. Such support, along with empires having been weakened by war, reduced the need for violent anti-colonialism. Roshwald argues it is difficult to estimate the commitment to nationalism if opposition is 'low cost'. Where it was 'high cost', as in Nazi occupied France and Holland, it appeared weaker than in less thoroughly suppressed places like Thailand. As Vermeiren notes, success in achieving independence does not correlate directly with the strength of nationalism.

The other chapters in I/2 focus on nation as elite idea or political outcome, rather than political movement. Leerssen argues that romanticism makes the nation itself the charismatic legitimation of power. D'Auria explores arguments between 18th century intellectuals about national origins. Gachem shows how events combined to produce national outcomes: 'Atlantic revolutionary nations'. Von der Goltz argues that even in 1968, a year of internationalist movements, nationalism—meaning acceptance that the world would continue to be organised nationally—remained central.

Nationalism was challenging imperial rule across the world by 1900. This is the principal concern of II/1 with a series of excellent chapters on European empires (Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian/Soviet), European overseas empires (Dutch, British, French, the imperial 'zone' of Indochina) and the Japanese empire. These set the frame for the shift of focus in later sections on anti-imperialist movements. Chapters on the Iberian Atlantic zone, the United States and Germany are about expansionist states rather than formal empire. Finally, there are two chapters on anti-colonial nationalism in the Middle East/North Africa and in Africa.

I would criticise one element in the short editorial postscript. Having made the important point that empire and nation should not be chronologically separated from each other, it is not clear whether this refers to nationhood or nationalism. The editors suggest one can discern the long-run formation of national identities which shaped postimperial national identity. Yet, most of the authors do not argue this. Where such identity is explicitly traced—in Tuong Vu's account of being Vietnamese in French Indochina—it is linked to an earlier *imperial*, not *ethnonational* idea. Some chapters argue that late imperial rule promoted 'national' identity rather than regarding the latter as oppositional. Boyar shows this for the 'millet' system in the Ottoman Empire, and Varga for how voting and other rights are linked to language differences in the western half of the Habsburg Empire. Muminov argues that the shift from separate island to 'Japanese' identity was rapid and modern. In pre-1815 Russia, the major national challenge was Polish, as with Vietnam, grounded in a pre-modern 'imperial' identity.

Such revisionist imperial history is not, contrary to the editors' suggestion, 'nostalgic'. Work on the later Habsburg Empire (where there has admittedly been much post-1918 nostalgia) does not idealise the empire but rather questions support for nationalism, e.g., using the concept of 'national indifference', and arguing that strong support came with the First World War, especially following Habsburg defeat in 1918.

Many chapters show 'national identity' changing, often radically, in the 'nation-state', as in Emma Hunter's excellent essay, 'African Nations'. 'Nation-state' means the 'sovereign state' as defined by the League of Nations after 1919 and then by the United Nations after 1945. The UN, reacting against the problems of national 'majorities/minorities' which followed 1918, identified the colony as the territory in which sovereignty was vested. The new states then vehemently opposed separatist or irredentist claims, sometimes labelling them as 'tribalism'. Furthermore, historians have argued that few of these claims had much basis in colonial or pre-colonial times.[5]

2.4 | Nationalism, Other Ideologies and Cultural Practices

The formation of a world order based on the nation-state has globalised 'nationalism studies' and expanded it to many different subjects. This is made evident in the rest of the second volume.

II/2, 'Transnational and religious missions and identities', considers how nationalism interacted with various secular and religious ideologies.

Leonhard outlines the initially positive links between liberalism and nationalism but how this was strained by the rise of mass politics, the erosion of free trade, and modern forms of warfare, all associated with nationalism. Traverso covers the well-known subjects of Marx, German socialism and Bolshevism. Less familiar is how particular thinkers and movements (Otto Bauer in Austria, the Jewish Bund in Russia) factored nationalism into their ideas and how Lenin was more complex when confronted with nationalist movements than Soviet orthodoxy suggests. As for 'religion', most of these essays implicitly assume that nationalism and a world order of nation-states are modern. The chapters then outline such a diversity of responses to nationalism as to defy any overall evaluation.

The chapter by Gal stands out as relentlessly one-sided in its treatment of Jewish nationhood and nationalism as ancient and virtuous, and of modern Zionism as its heroic culmination. No alternative interpretations are considered. The chapter ends with a ringing quotation from the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 that the new state 'will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex'. [435] Making the rhetoric of the founding constitutions of new states a guide to their history, both before and after that moment, is not to be recommended.

The portmanteau title of II/3 enables contributors to write about just about anything 'and nationalism'.[6] It treats two broad themes. Ten chapters relate nationalism to large scale concepts: national self-determination and sovereignty, citizenship, capitalism, economic nationalism, religion, race, terrorism, genocide, war and gender. The remaining chapters focus on specific cultural practices: historiography and memory, tourism, literature, food and the media.

The chapters on large scale concepts are highly variable. Most focus on the post-1800 period. Dieckhoff's essay on 'self-determination' pivots on 1918/19 when the term acquires legal and political significance as international relations are in part reordered around the notion of sovereign, territorial nation-states, though with different, often violently conflicting conceptions of what made these 'national'. Hutchinson presents a wide-ranging and balanced treatment of the complex relationships between war and national, including a well-argued non-modernist view of national identity. Palen and Muller focus on capitalism and national economies, though questionably equating economic nationalism with protectionism and even economic development goals. Van der Veer's essay on religion persuasively argues that from the Reformation onwards the 'national' increasingly becomes the 'container' within which religious movements operate.

Other essays extend beyond nationalism. Conversi (citizenship) and Blumenau (terrorism) start in the ancient period with Greek city–states and assassins. Nagel considers gender and modernity generally. Carmichael looks at race, ideology and genetic research in the Dinaric region. Bartov's essay on genocide in a Ukrainian village is original and important, but less in relating this to nationalism and more in shifting from the focus on the Holocaust as organised, impersonal mass murder.

Exploring relationships between nationalism and cultural practices introduces even more diversity. Zuelow's essay on modern tourism builds on the point that the 'national'—often equated with the exotic—is central in much tourism discourse. The link is less close but present in the chapter by Scholliers on 'foodways'. Berger explores the explicit link between modern historical writing and the 'national' in his essay on professional historiography and commemoration. Writing about mass media Bösch shows how it can be used by nationalism. He also references the more fundamental link argued by Benedict Anderson, namely, of 'print capitalism' as maker of the national imagination. However, much of the essay is about mass media as an instrument of states, not the same thing as nationalism. The essay on music by Helmers, though focused on opera and classical music, starts usefully by outlining a variety of approaches to the subject, e.g., as aspects of 'national' culture or modes of national mobilisation, and also countertrends (e.g., the 'Americanisation' of popular music). This essay compares strikingly with D'Haen on literature where I could discern no clear line of argument.

2.5 | Concluding Remarks

These volumes reflect how the subject has developed since those 1983 books by Anderson and Gellner. Anthony Smith played a key role in analysing these works as 'modernist' and contrasting them with non-modernist approaches, thereby creating a fruitful 'field' of debate. The initial focus was on 'when' was nationalism. Modernists tended to see nationalism as shaping national identity, non-modernists the reverse. Before this debate, historians had generally taken an eclectic, case by case approach. However, given that these cases were presented as long-run national histories, these were implicitly non-modernist.

Once there were explicit debates about nationhood and nationalism, the geographical range expanded and comparative history extended beyond single cases. Then came studies relating nationhood and nationalism to other broad themes. Finally, as national identity has become both global and 'banal', historians of a diverse range of topics seek to place their particular interest in a national frame. To this one could add the very present minded concern with nationalism as a highly diverse range of 'populisms', in my view rightly left out of this historical work.

This expansion of the field of nationalism studies means the singular term 'field' has steadily lost its meaning. The editors have done a superb job in reflecting this trend and finding relevant contributors. However, it also means that the editors confront difficult, if not impossible challenges. It is in that context that I make some criticisms.

Editors have responsibilities to their contributors and readers. So far as contributors are concerned, I think the editors should have made clearer that 'nationhood' and 'nationalism' are conceptually distinct subjects. There is often a temptation to conflate or confuse the two. As I have already noted, modernists and non-modernists tend to subordinate one of the concepts to the other. However, in many of the chapters, it is unclear or simply implicit which concept is at the centre of attention, and in some chapters, the authors drift away from both subjects to focus more on their chosen theme and its relationship to other subjects.

Turning to responsibility to readers, for a book such as this, the principal target is the 'general' reader. In specialised works one can take for granted a deal of background knowledge but not here. Therefore, in addition to ensuring the relevance and coherence of chapters, the editors should insist that, whatever approach an author pursues, they should make readers aware of other ones. If an author makes the argument for 'ancient' nationhood, or pre-modern national identity, she/he should at least cite work, which disputes that argument.[7]

There are other, easier editorial responsibilities. Some chapters are, in my view, virtually unreadable due less to lack of coherence as assuming prior knowledge of the relevant history and/or historiography, and even terminology; something unreasonable to expect of the general reader. In some cases (e.g., the chapters on Spanish imperialism and national (ist) responses), cross-referencing would add value. Some basic maps and chronologies would be helpful.

Finally, instead of short postscripts to the different sections, I think the editors should have written more circumstantial introductions. Eric Storm and I have criticised some postscripts for misleadingly emphasising the non-modernist approach when this is not reflected in the contributions. More important is to provide a rationale for each of the sections and to situate its chapters within the framework of that section.

It is more difficult to edit a work of this kind now compared with even just over a decade or so ago, when I edited such a book. The editors are wise not to use a term such as 'handbook' in their title as the subject has expanded and diversified so much as to defeat the ambition that implies. I have criticised the editors for not doing more to help contributors and readers. However, given the challenge facing them, they have brought together an impressive range of essays on nationhood and nationalism.

3 | Response by Cathie Carmichael, Matthew D'auria and Aviel Roshwald

We are grateful for the time and energy John Breuilly and Eric Storm have invested in reading through these massive volumes and commenting upon them. While appreciating the careful thought underlying their criticisms, we also are struck by some of the conceptual pitfalls reflected in portions of their arguments. There are also some analytical and taxonomic issues about which we simply disagree, as scholars are bound to do.

Storm's suggestion that these volumes systematically fall into the very trap of methodological nationalism that we set out to avoid seems particularly problematic. Breuilly responds by pointing out the practical impediments to a geographically decentred approach to writing history. No doubt, in the course of discussing any given national movement or community, an author may write in a way that seems to take its existence at a given point in time for granted and/or that focuses on dynamics internal to the imagination of that community. But the alternative is to place every reference to this or that national collective in air quotes and reflexively employ

other tedious distancing mechanisms that would quickly come to clutter the writing and interfere with the flow of the discussion without really adding much of value.

Perhaps, we simply have different notions of what constitutes methodological nationalism. Our understanding of the term is that it describes an approach that reproduces or fails to question, simplistic assumptions about an irreducible essence of nationhood. We remain convinced that the overwhelming majority of contributions to this volume do not fall into that trap. One of the bases of Storm's claim is that 'throughout the volumes there is a strong focus on prominent nationalist movements and existing nation-states'. If writing about actually existing examples of nationhood and nationalism constitutes methodological nationalism, then no doubt we are guilty as charged. But to use such a wide definitional net would be to put an end to the historical study of nationhood and nationalism altogether. It was not our purpose to create a work of counterfactual history.

Storm goes on to argue that even organising some chapters around continent-sized units of analysis constitutes a perspectival shortcoming which he dubs (perhaps half-jokingly?) 'methodological continentalism'. What he advocates instead is a greater emphasis on globe-spanning interactions and entanglements. There is certainly much to be learned and gained from such an approach, and we do feel elements of it are to be found in some of the chapters, such as those dealing with the circulation of ideas among Atlantic revolutions or the interconnections among anti-colonial nationalisms. But it is not the only way of exploring the global history of nationhood and nationalism. As Breuilly points out in his review, while the social-scientific study of modern nationalism has indeed tended to be sweepingly global in its categorical and analytical formulations, this has come at the cost of a heavily Eurocentric bias that tends to cast non-Western nationhoods and nationalisms as imitations of and/or responses to Western global domination. In the final analysis, we were not setting out to compile a *Cambridge Theory of Nationhood and Nationalism*, but rather a history thereof. Being theory-averse may be a shortcoming of historiography, but there is also some benefit to being resistant to reductionist generalisations. If readers put down our volumes with an understanding that the shared modern vocabulary of nationhood and nationalism was used to articulate, legitimise and advance a highly diverse range of cultural and political traditions, sensibilities and agendas, the efforts of contributors and editors alike will not have been in vain. If anything, perhaps we should have entitled the collection a history of nationhoods and nationalisms, in order to emphasise the kaleidoscopic diversity of ways in which relationships between constructions of nationhood and ethnocultural, religious, ideological, political and state-sovereignty claims have evolved, and continue to do so. A history that spans the globe should be alive to the enormous variety of human cultures and perspectives—something that a single-minded preoccupation with patterns of interaction and convergence can obscure.

Indeed, our decision to devote a considerable proportion of these volumes to pre-modern eras was intended not to make a hard-and-fast argument about the ubiquity of nations or nationalism throughout time and space, but to highlight the fluid, ever-changing, and geographically variable ways in which identity formations—including those with recognisably national elements—have been constructed. Scholars and interested readers may be more open to recognising this fluidity in the context of the pre-modern than they are when turning their gaze to more recent times, and this may, in turn, lead them to rethink assumptions about the homogeneity of the nation-state model in the modern world.

Scholars disagree about how to define and understand the interplay of ethnic, civic, religious, dynastic and other claims of authority and on loyalty. Some see the experience of nationhood as exclusively an artefact of political and propagandist work by modern nationalists, whereas others note cases where national consciousness appears to have preceded its active politicisation. Some pre-modern cases point toward politicised conceptions of ethnicity or nationhood, while other may not. To impose, a cut-and-dried typological distinction between nationhood as sentiment and nationalism as ideology would have discouraged contributors from exploring the porousness between these categories. The bottom line is that we invited and embraced the sort of intellectual diversity reflected in the volumes, rather than only selecting contributors whose findings would reinforce our own view that emotions and aspirations associated with nationhood could and did play an important role in a number of pre-modern societies.

That said, one of the weaknesses of the modernist approach to the study of nationhood and nationalism is that its rejection of the relevance or importance of nationhood in any pre-modern context reflects the internalisation of a nationalist definition of nationhood. That is, it assumes that nationhood and/or nationalism only become 'real' phenomena when they have saturated and reshaped popular consciousness to a degree that realises and fulfils nationalists' a priori claims about the 'true', long-suppressed identity of the masses. In this way, the modernist school, ironically enough, itself falls victim to a peculiar form of methodological nationalism. The reality is that intellectual and political elites have always played disproportionately important roles in shaping societies and polities; that is what makes them elites, after all. If notions of nationhood become an influential force among such elites that can become a historically significant phenomenon in and of itself, even if most of a given population remains unaware of, or inconsistently responsive to, the ideas shaping elite agendas. This is true of the modern era as it is of the pre-modern. In practice, after all, the triumph of nationalism and the nation-state has never been final or complete. The modern division of the world into self-contained, clearly bounded units of national self-determination has always been in tension with a variety of countervailing forces, structures, cultural norms and ideas. Amidst ever-changing historical and geopolitical conditions, the popular grip of national forms of identity continually waxes and wanes in interaction with the ebb and flow of other forms and categories of collective imagination, interest and action. It remains our hope that the volumes we have co-edited will allow readers to explore this fluid dynamic, which defies attempts to force it into rigid theoretical categories or hard-and-fast divisions between modern and pre-modern.

Endnotes

[1] Storm (2024) himself has just published an excellent 'global' history of nationalism but this necessarily is highly selective and is made possible by the focus a single authored book can take.

[2] For ease of reference I will number the volumes I and II, and the sections within those volumes, 1, 2, 3.

[3] For extended discussions of these two books, see my introduction to Gellner (2006) and Breuilly (2016).

[4] I see little difference between these two sections, especially chapters on the 19th and 20th centuries dealing with nationalist oppositions to imperial domination.

[5] Terry Ranger, one of the first of these historians to argue for the 'invention of tribes', went on to co-edit with Eric Hobsbawm *The Invention of Tradition,* also published in that seminal year of 1983. However, the contributions cover not only nationalism—something often suggested in subsequent citations—but many other subjects. Indeed, that mistake is itself testimony to the way a new identity can be invented!

[6] In full: 'Intersections: National(ist) synergies and tensions with other social, economic, political and cultural categories, identities and practices.'

[7] As, for example, do Grosby and Hutchinson.

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