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NATIONALISM AND THE COLONIAL LEGACY
IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA:
INTRODUCTION

The study of nationalism has been reinvigorated by the debates on the subject carried out in the 1980s and 1990s.¹ Most authors on the subject can be divided into two camps; those who look at the material and objective conditions for the rise of nation-states as a social formation, and those who concentrate on how a national consciousness emerges. (In recent years, this division has ranged classical Marxists and modernization theorists on one side against postmodernists and subaltern theorists on the other). In considering this body of work, one can thus make a distinction similar to the one that E. P. Thompson famously elaborated (drawing on Marx) in labor history, differentiating between a class in itself and a class for itself, between a social class such as factory workers constituted by the objective facts of its material existence and a social grouping that is self-conscious about itself as a class so that it launches unions and labor parties. The former does not automatically or always result in the latter. We will discuss these theories in relationship to the Middle East and Central Asia and to the little theoretical work done on Middle Eastern nationalisms. Many authors speak as though “nationalism” is a unitary set of practices and beliefs that has a natural history, being born at a particular time and maturing into a long-term, fairly static phenomenon. Partha Chatterjee has shown, however, that the character of nationalism changes according to whether it is a metropolitan phenomenon or a colonial one. Implicit in his work, further, is that nationalism—or, at least, the making and conceiving of nationalism—continues in the post-colonial period, throwing up new forces and perspectives that challenge previous formulations of it.² Most writers on the subject worry about how the culture of nationalism tends to create a positive image of the nation as homogeneous while defining itself against a hated and despised Other or set of Others, within and without.³ The debate over the peculiarities of the colonial legacy and its long-term impact on the colonized has constituted the central theme of post-colonial scholarship. Those involved in the two mainly disparate debates—on nationalism and on post-colonialism—need to address each other’s concerns. To date, most discussions of the post-colonial condition have centered on South Asia, and it is our aim to open up this debate by considering the very different cases of the Middle East and Central Asia, the one having been subjected to capitalist colonialism, and the latter to czarist domination, followed by the Soviet experiment, with all the ambiguities it introduced in relations between metropole and periphery.

We should begin with some definitions. The “colonial” era for most Middle Eastern and Central Asian states can be divided into several periods: informal imperialism, formal colonial domination, and neo-colonialism. The decline or the complicated nature of neo-colonialism in recent decades gives rise to a post-colonial era, in which the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia are unable to impose their wills on countries such as Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq, despite the continued legacy in the region of the age of imperialism and of the superpower rivalries of the Cold War. Obviously, this periodization looks different in each region and does not fit some very well. Algeria experienced formal colonization early for the Middle East (beginning in 1830) and gained independence late (in 1962), whereas Iraq was not colonized until World War I and was formally independent by 1932, though a long period of British neo-colonial domination lasted at least until 1958. Iran was formally occupied by the great powers only during World War II, and only parts of Turkey felt the heel of European colonial troops for a very brief period after World War I, so that in both these countries the period of “formal colonial domination” was absent or extremely truncated. Czarist colonization of Turkestan in Central Asia from the 1860s had great similarities with the project of French North Africa, but the intervening Soviet period, 1917–91, introduced specificities and peculiarities into the relationship of metropole and periphery that complicate the story enormously. Still, most Middle Eastern and Central Asian populations during the past two centuries have lived through these four phases, even if at differing times and degrees of severity.

By “nationalism” and “nation-state” we mean a set of changing discursive and institutional practices that differ from pre-modern self-conceptions and political arrangements. The modern nation is made up of citizens with an affective and imaginative commitment to identity with co-citizens. The nation has a state that governs a particular territory and strives to impose a common identity on all citizens through state education, usually focusing on linguistic unity, and that represents a political, diplomatic, and economic unity with its own sovereignty in all these realms. Nationalism is the subjective counterpart of the nation, a space of interiority in which the nation is conceived of as an aspect of Self, as well as an ideology wherein the nation is given a cobbled-together (and often purloined) history, a distinctive cultural heritage, and a commonality of interest that all stop at the borders of the nation-state. Nationalism implies the ability to identify with a large group of other people, but it also always involves the constitution of those outside the nation as Other in a powerful manner.

Originally, the word “nation” simply meant a “people” or a “race.” Obviously, there have been peoples—or what Anthony Smith calls “ethnies”—for a very long time.⁴ These have constituted themselves on claims of common descent, or common language, or common religion, or some other set of commonalities that were felt to set them apart in some way from other such groups. The distinction between objective markers of identity and a consciousness of that identity continues to be salient here. Some populations with a distinctive language have not felt that their language was the most important part of their identity and have been glad to be subsumed in a group constituted on some other basis. (Turkish-speaking Armenians tended to think of themselves as Armenians rather than as Turks by virtue of their membership in the Armenian Orthodox Church.) During much of the Ottoman period, it was more impor-

tant to most Arabic-speakers that they were Muslims and subjects of the sultan than that they spoke Arabic at home. Benedict Anderson has argued that villagers and townspeople in the medieval and early-modern world had local identities growing out of dialect, and wider identities growing out of membership in universal religions (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism) or as subjects of polyglot empires. The standardization of country languages with the printing revolution and the rise of mass literacy displaced both empire and religion as the primary marker of identity, allowing a new *imaginaire* to evolve.⁵ Anderson's positioning of religion as coeval with the dynastic form of political organization has it collapse as a central identity at the same time the monarchies do. He ignores the ways in which religious ethnicity underpins many nationalisms in the global South and the manner in which supposedly "universal" social formations can often be successfully co-opted for national purposes (the same thing has after all often been true of language and of ideologies such as socialism). The essay by Sami Zubaida in this issue suggests the ways in which the case of Iraq poses problems for the Andersonian approach to religion and nationalism.

Smith focuses on those groups that developed particular identities in the pre-modern world, including diaspora religious communities such as the Jews and Armenians, and compact territorial ones such as the Druze and Maronites. Zubaida, looking at the same material as Smith, has argued, however, that the latter's ethnies were themselves begotten by the state.⁶ In addition, Smith's analysis often simplifies a very complex set of overlapping identities that changed radically over time and did not have the sort of essentialist core identity of a pre-nationalist sort that he attributes to them. Looking at the clans in the Shouf Mountains who happened to belong to the esoteric, Shi'i-derived Druze religion as proto-nationalists or even as a discrete group is to see them through the lens of modern nationalism. Clans were split by internal feuds; the "wise men" of the esoteric Druze religion did not share the religion's core beliefs with the mere laity; and Druze clans could unite with Shi'is, Sunnis, or Christians against other Druze clans. In the period before the civil wars of the 19th century, such religiously identified clans were quite spread out and not so compact in their territory, after all. The groups Smith discusses are relatively small and had no "national" aspirations or pretensions before the mid-19th century (if then).

Smith's ethnie is not therefore "nation" in the modern sense, and probably does not even have much to do with the nation. That is, modern nations often claim the cultural and historical heritage of a particular ethnic or linguistic group of the past, but the claim is *ex post facto* and usually rather suspect. Indeed, the primordialist theory of the nation, in Clifford Geertz's famous reporting of it as he found it among Indonesians he interviewed, was that the nation-state comes into being when a pre-existing ethnic identity finally manages to achieve statehood. That is, Indonesia existed all along in the form of Indonesian identity but was repressed by fractious sultanates, then Dutch colonialism, until finally the Indonesian "nation" was freed from its shackles and attained its full incarnation in the post-colonial state. (In fact, Indonesians differed markedly in their conceptions of national identity, bursting into violence over these issues in the mid-1960s and again in the early 21st century). No academic accepts the primordialist formulation in its bald or simple form, because any historian or social scientist can see the forms of discontinuity and dispersal that characterize pre-modern ethnicities, making it impossible to view them as synonymous with, or

even foundational to, the state in an uncomplicated manner. Smith, who gives such centrality to the *ethnie*, probably comes closest to legitimating some form of the primordialist argument, but he is more sophisticated than that, and it is not fair to see him as a primordialist *tout court*. But even Smith's argument that nations are often built around *ethnies*, as he says France was built around the Bourbons, concedes far too much to the primordialists, who stress eternal ethnic identities through history that fall asleep or are repressed and then awakened, incarnating themselves in nation-states in the 20th century (Ronald Suny has called this Romantic view the "Sleeping Beauty theory of nationalism.") The question is whether pre-existing ethnic identities can be seen as causal variables in the rise of nation-states, and we think it obvious that they cannot. No state has been established simply because an *ethnie* existed. Large numbers of linguistic, religious, and other groups do not have their own states, and they do not appear to want one; nor do they appear ambivalent about it. Moreover, many multi-ethnic nations have been erected. In the Middle East and Central Asia, almost all nation-states began as the result of colonial borders imposed from the outside that have very little to do with pre-existing ethnic boundaries (which in any case were so porous that they seldom formed much of a border).

Interestingly, Soviet ethnography and history exhibited a strong variant of primordialism through their use of the concepts of "ethnos" and "ethnogenesis." Various adjustments were necessary to make the notion of ethnos as a set of enduring, trans-historical characteristics fit in with the orthodox evolutionist sequence of socio-economic formations postulated by Stalin. The Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences solved this problem by invoking the concept of "ethno-social organism" (ESO). This idea subsumed both *etnikos*—namely, the stable common features of language, culture, psychology, and self-consciousness characterizing a collectivity—and the types of broader societies (primitive, feudal, capitalist) of which they formed a part. This move made it possible to posit ethnos as something consistent, enduring, and objectively existing while paying lip service to the Marxist–Leninist sequencing of socio-economic formations. According to this scheme, only industrial societies could constitute nations (*natsiia*), as opposed to kinship or tribally based societies that remained only "peoples" (*narodnost*). Not surprisingly, and as is clearly demonstrated in Tyntchtykbek Tchoroiev's contribution to this volume, this theory has become a subject of bitter contestation for post-Soviet historians of Central Asia whose reinterpretations of their past involve both a search for historical antecedents to their modern statehood and a way out of the truncated Soviet version of their "nationhood." There has, however, quite frequently been a substitution of new forms of primordialism for the old (recovering the "lost" nation), which can also be found in early phases of nation-building elsewhere.

It is true that intellectuals and politicians have frequently appealed to the supposed existence of an ancient ethnicity in order to prosecute political projects that creating a nation-state make possible, but their formulation of such supposed long-standing identities varies so much over time and place that its arbitrary nature cannot be concealed. Thus, German nationalists whose constituents were scattered geographically tended to appeal to language, whereas Zionists appealed to the multilingual and equally dispersed Jews on the basis of religious ethnicity, seeing Jews as a race or "nation" rather than Judaism as a religion. Yet Zionism has been diverse as a self-

conception, and recently religious community was invoked in admitting the Ethiopian Falashas into Israel, so that religious ethnicity can be complicated by race. Those who perceive their “nations” to enjoy more compact constituencies tended to speak of long tenure by a historical community on a particular territory and to pay less attention to language and religion (French civic nationalists did not exclude Huguenots or Bretons). In addition, the strategies changed over time. Eric Hobsbawm has suggested that the mid-19th-century shift in Europe to a conception of nation based on ethnicity came about in part as a result of the unification of Germany and Italy, the partition of Austria-Hungary, the Polish revolts, and the ethnically based movements among Balkan peoples for independence from the Ottoman Empire.⁷ That is, there is something problematic with Smith’s very idea of “ethnie” as the basis for nationalisms, because nationalist thinkers selected “ethnies” for their own purposes from a mass of actually existing conflicting identities, and they made different sorts of selections depending on their changing circumstances. Pre-modern ethnicities themselves have been reconfigured by the nationalist gaze and are always to some extent constructed identities.

In medieval and even often in early modern times, the lack of standardization of languages and the ferment of popular religiosity left little doubt as to the polyglot nature of the empires that were then erected.⁸ The diverse and disparate communities that formed the subjects of these empires fought one another as vassals of their sovereign, not as members of a nation fighting an ethnic Other. Some of what we would now call Afghans served Iran, while others served the Mughals, and they might easily have found themselves in opposing armies. Nor did most pre-modern peoples who spoke what we now recognize as a family of dialects forming a single language recognize that they did so, because in the absence of print, widespread literacy, and national education, many dialects were mutually incomprehensible. This difficulty in communicating across dialects still affects the Kurds.⁹ The Pan-Turkic ideal, moreover, often founders on the significant vocabulary and even grammatical differences between Anatolian Turkish and languages such as Kazakh and Uzbek. In the Middle East, the military of Safavid Iran was derived mainly from Turkic-speaking tribes, and these Turkic peoples happily fought the Ottoman Turks on behalf of a Persian bureaucracy that used an Indo-European language. Arabic-speaking officers from what is now Lebanon fought Arabic-speaking warriors of what is now Yemen on behalf of the Turkic-dominated Ottoman state. In Central Asia, the Emirate of Bukhara kept its chancellery records in Tajik Persian, despite the largely Turkic character of the ruling elite.

Miroslav Hroch and Ernest Gellner, each in his own way, concentrate on the material conditions for the emergence of nations. Hroch, a Marxist, posited that the shift from feudalism to capitalism was implicated in the growth of nationalism. Hroch’s formulation reflected Stalinist stage theory, such that it was the change in material base that gave rise to a new superstructure of nation-state. Thus, the nation-state grew up in tandem with modern capitalism, and he posited three stages to the emergence of nationalism among the smaller European countries in the 19th century. The first was the rise of a group of intellectuals with an interest in local culture, who collect folklore and do linguistic studies, most often without any political agenda. In Hroch’s second stage, local intellectuals and politicians who seek greater autonomy or feel

themselves blocked in their career advancement by metropolitan officials attempt to cobble together nativist symbols and to appeal to the middle classes, workers, and peasants to work together for self-rule. In the third phase, a separate state is achieved, which in turn imposes on the peoples within its territory a national identity.¹⁰ That such processes occurred seems clear, though the “natural history” of their unfolding as stages presented by Hroch seems overly schematic. Gellner objects to the language of feudalism and capitalism, positing that the nation-state arises during the shift from agrarian to industrial society.¹¹ From Gellner’s point of view as an anthropologist, pre-modern societies are based on kinship ties of patronage, and industrial society disrupts those ties by creating vast geographical and social mobility, as clans are broken up and workers moved where they are needed by industry, while promotions and reward structures are rationalized on the basis of merit rather than nepotism. In pre-industrial societies, profits go into the pockets of one’s cousins, who have a claim on one’s success, whereas in industrial society individuals can accumulate capital. The nation-state thus replaces kinship as a focus of loyalty. In Gellner’s view, strong clan-based systems are a sign that the industrial nation has not quite made its advent. Both Hroch and Gellner appear to concede Hobsbawm’s contention that “the basic characteristic of the modern nation and everything connected with it is its modernity.”¹² Prasenjit Duara, however, has critiqued the simplistic distinction between modern and pre-modern, pointing to the sophisticated political identities available to medieval and early-modern East Asians.¹³ In China, after all, wood-block–printed books existed and had the potential to create a small elite reading public that was geographically dispersed, and the examination system for the civil bureaucracy discounted family background in those tested centuries before nepotism and patronage ceased to be the primary recruiting tools for European bureaucracies. Still, Duara admits that “the point is not that national identity existed in premodern times,” but simply that a stark binary opposition between modern political consciousness and pre-modern localistic ones does not capture the variety of political identities in the medieval and early-modern period, where occasionally forms of political identity did grow up that resembled national ones.

It may be too much to say that the argument for the rise of nationalism on the basis of a shift in the mode of production to capitalism or the reorganization of production and family in industrial society is completely worthless. But it seems irrelevant to the origins of nationalism in the Middle East and Central Asia. Many individual societies in which nationalist-like movements emerged were largely agrarian at the time—for instance, the formerly Ottoman Balkans in the 19th century, the Arab lands in the 1920s, and British India. Most Middle Eastern nationalisms grew out of or up with World War I (a momentous period for India, as well, with the Khilafat movement in support of the Ottoman sultan who was an ally of the Germans against the British), though a consensus is emerging that national identity in most individual Arab states, such as Egypt and Syria, really congealed with solidity only in the period from 1920 forward.¹⁴ Central Asian identities were crafted in a dialectic between popular movements and Soviet nationalities policy after 1917, as Nadira Abdurakhimova and Marianne Kamp argue in this issue. No large-scale industrialization preceded the rise of Middle Eastern nationalisms; no great mobility of labor, and no cutting of the obligations imposed by kin ties, occurred in these regions. Indeed, to this day most countries in

the region cannot be considered industrialized; nor have clan and kinship networks been completely disrupted in the way Gellner describes. If one were to cast about for a change in the organization of production that occurred as a background to the rise of Middle Eastern nationalisms, one might fix on large-scale cash-cropping for the world market, which some call “agrarian capitalism.” The Wafdist state in Egypt, the Pahlavi state in Iran, the Kemalist state in Turkey—all early sites of nationalist ideology in the inter-war period—depended primarily on agrarian capitalism or various sorts of rent for their income, and all were involved in some sort of conflict with European colonial powers over control of their national economies. Although the age of agrarian capitalism saw the concentration of landed wealth in the hands of a very small number of families (typically only 2,000 or 3,000 in places such as Egypt and Iraq), peasant resistance was minimized through the establishment of hacienda-like estates and extensive state-backed repression. It is possible that the multi-class, anti-imperial “nationalist” parties of the 1920s, such as the Wafd, depended on patronage and other social networks that grew out of this big-landlord agrarian capitalism, and that therefore the hacienda-like estates were implicated in the rise of nationalism and in the ability of Wafd landed politicians to mobilize their peasants for political purposes. In India, the reverse has been argued: that peasant–landlord class conflict in the 1920s and after was the cauldron in which nationalist consciousness was fired among the subaltern classes. In either case, agrarian capitalism, however great a factor it might have been (obviously in differing and contingent ways), cannot be made to perform the work Gellner wanted his transition-to-industrial-society theory to perform, insofar as it clearly does not affect kin ties. Finally, in Central Asia the Soviet approach to collectivizing agriculture and to organizing society and politics along party lines produced different outcomes from a “base” of cotton cash-cropping and then light industrialization.

It is easier to conclude that in some instances in early Europe, large-scale economic changes and the emergence of industrial bourgeoisies and working classes may have had implications for the development of nationalism of a peculiar sort. Elites from largely agrarian societies, however, could take up and transform the idea of nation-state, applying different forms of the phenomenon to their very different circumstances, which were complicated by the challenge of European imperialism. As Sami Zubaida will argue in this issue, the key element in the formation of nationalisms in the global South is an elite social class’s control of a rationalized bureaucratic state, with its vast impact on the economy and cultural life. That is, for the word “nationalism” in Gellner’s remark, “It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way around,”¹⁵ we should substitute the phrase “the state.” Despite what Hroch and Gellner say, agrarian elites in control of a post-colonial state clearly could cobble together new “national” political arrangements without their countries’ first undergoing the large-scale shift from agrarian to industrial or from kin-based to individualist conditions. Lending such centrality to the state does not detract from the real contributions to nationalist consciousness of various social strata, including peasants and workers in some instances; it forms a key context within which these classes’ political imagination tends to be fired.

The state accomplishes the task of creating a nation in many ways, including by setting up national school systems that impose a single linguistic standard and a cob-

bled-together “national” history, and by establishing conscript armies that throw young men from all over the country together and forge affective links among them. The nation-state is not, as an earlier generation of Marxists thought, created by the emergence of a regional market; rather, the nation-state itself creates a national market. The centrality of the state to this process cannot be overestimated. A number of social scientists have argued persuasively that the contemporary nations of formerly Soviet-ruled territories were in important respects fashioned by Soviet nationalities policy.¹⁶ A consideration of the state leads us to a recognition of the violence and coercion inherent in nation-making. The state must subdue and encompass the peasants, often with much bloodshed, or it must reorganize them into estates or collectives, or it must delegate such disciplining of their imaginations to big landlords and private-property law. Gory peasant struggles against a local landed elite or against a colonial state have often figured largely in their accession to a nationalist consciousness. Through conscripting peasants into a national army and casting them against a foreign power, as well, the state employed massive violence to constitute them as a nation. From the 1950s, some state actors, such as Egypt and India, attempted with some success to co-opt the middle peasantry to the post-colonial state-building project through significant land reform.

Whereas Gellner sees nationalism as a form of false consciousness, a vast collective lie with destructive import, Anderson speaks instead of “imagined community,” a community that calls into being a territorial state that in turn creates the nation.¹⁷ Anderson sees this act of imagination as constructive and real. He perhaps overstates the part played in this process by the bourgeoisie and intellectuals, and smoothes over too many differences in ideas about national identity and organization when he calls nationalism “modular,” as though it were an easily transferable tool kit. Others have insisted on the importance of workers and peasants, who must for reasons of their own forsake their initially more local conception of identity for a powerful cosmopolitan national movement. In fact, in contrast to the totalistic and monochromatic vision of nationalism exhibited by many theorists, it matters when political identities are formed (whether modern or pre-modern, 19th-century or 20th-century), and it matters whether a nationalism developed in a powerful metropole or under anti-imperialist or post-colonial conditions.

But beyond the question of the historical and social matrix for any particular movement, there are two main forms, or Weberian “ideal types,” of nationalism, and these are discussed by Hobsbawm. The first is the revolutionary–democratic or “civic” conception of nationhood that is not tied to ethnic identity, as in late-18th-century France and the United States. In Central Asia, Soviet ideology condemned chauvinism and promoted a sort of civic nationalism, but at the same time it vested titular nationalities with special prerogatives as long as they were perceived to avoid ethnically based nationalism (which carried extremely negative connotations). The second, in Hobsbawm’s discussion, is a particularist nationalism, which is mainly linked in the minds of its proponents to race and language. As noted earlier, Hobsbawm holds that it did not really develop in Europe in earnest until the mid-19th century. Middle Eastern intellectuals deeply influenced by European thought, such as Fath ‘Ali Akhundzadeh, Ziya Gökalp, Sati’ al-Husri, and later George Antonius, tended to adopt this ethnically based idea of nationalism.

In addition, however, we would propose (along with several of our authors) that religion, like language and “race” or ethnicity, can also form a basis for particularistic nationalism. The argument that religions are universal and so excluded from playing such a specific role is deeply flawed. First of all, no religion is actually universal, regardless of its claims, though some are quite widespread. Second, languages also cross national borders. Thus, both English and Arabic serve as the languages of a number of nation-states, and yet, as with the “English-only” movement in California or the imposition of Arabic on Iraqi Kurdistan (a non–Arabic-speaking area), language can be infused with nationalist and particularist meaning. It is true that making religion the basis of nationalism can provoke apparent contradictions. (What does one make of co-religionists outside the nation-state that is founded on religion? This is a problem for largely Shi‘i Iran in its relationship with the Shi‘is of Lebanon and Bahrain. And what does one make of, for example, Iranian Sunnis or Iranian Christians in a Shi‘i Islamic Republic?) These contradictions, however, do not stand in the way of the implementation of religion-based nationalisms, as witnessed in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan (and, to a lesser extent, more recently in India, with the victory of the Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party). In each of these countries, a religious nationalism plays a central part in national identity, alongside ethnic, linguistic, and other factors. Academic discourse has often declined to classify religious nationalism as a form of nationalism, even though it is difficult to see why, analytically, a nationalism that bases itself on a sense of religious identity is ipso facto less authentic than secularist ethnic or linguistic movements. The remarks of Zubaida and Anthony Hyman in this issue challenge the notion of religious identity as a relic of the dynastic times, the universalism of which made it unsuitable to and outmoded by particularist nationalisms. Rather, the nationalist enterprise involves the positing of a people unlike other peoples, on a territory with a state, and is largely neutral with regard to the key term that makes for inclusion and exclusion. That term can be linguistic, based on (inaccurate and pre-scientific) notions of common descent or race, or based on religion. The “universalism” of the great religious traditions is, on closer examination, limited to a few abstract themes. In fact, the “universal” religions act as umbrellas for diverse local beliefs and social practices, binding them together rather loosely by appeal to some simple common themes, myths, and rituals. Insofar as religion is predominantly localistic in nature despite its apparent universalism, it can usually be co-opted for nationalist purposes. Thus, Pakistan’s mix of Hanafi jurisprudence; of Chishti, Suhrawardi, Naqshbandi and Qadiri Sufi orders; of reformist movements such as the Deobandis and Brelwis; of the modernism of Iqbal and his vast influence; of Panjabi Shi‘ism with its peculiar Sufi heritage, and the local prestige of Sufi pirs and ulama, often preaching in regional languages all formed an important set of lattices out of which an Islamic State of Pakistan could be formed that had its own flavor and that differentiated Pakistan from its Muslim neighbors of Iran and Afghanistan. To make matters even more complicated, this religious side to Pakistani nationalism has been taken both seriously and not seriously at various points in national discourse and political and legal practice. Religion, like any other identity, is a field of contestation rather than a stable essence, and struggles over the definition and place of religion can be variably articulated with a national sense of identity that is itself fluid and changing.

Where ethnic and religious nationalisms dominate multi-ethnic or multi-religious states, the particularist basis of the ideology can contribute to significant internal conflict, as in Lebanon, Iraq, or Bosnia. Even in states that espoused civic nationalism, however, imperialist projects such as those of the United States and France in Vietnam can lead to jingoistic definitions of national self-interest, with very destructive consequences. It should also be remembered that civic nationalisms such as those of France and the United States are often suffused with a sort of unspoken ethnic nationalism, feelings that are played upon by Jean-Marie LePen in France and by white supremacists in the United States.

Political identity is not a new thing in history, but the *imaginaire* of the nation-state does have new features that differ from localistic ethnic or imperial-territorial identifications. It was initially fostered by the vast reorganization of agrarian society attendant on the rise of industry (in the North Atlantic) or of agrarian capitalism, the rise of the modern bureaucratic state and multi-class struggles against imperialism (in the global South). While Anderson's emphasis on the printing press and the spread of literacy, the newspaper, the novel, the census, and the museum is a major theoretical insight for understanding aspects of nationalism, these phenomena affected a vanishingly small number of persons in the initial period of the nationalist project in the regions with which we are concerned, and state-related printing and educational projects had a far more wide-ranging effect.

The nation-constructing process is ongoing. In much of the global South, it has occurred in the context of colonialism and post-colonialism. All of the major markers of identity on which proponents of nationalism have concentrated can be invoked with special rhetorical force in the colonial and post-colonial situations. "Race," language, and religion are often social markers that differ starkly as between colonizer and colonized and can be appealed to by nationalist nation-builders. The presence of the colonial and post-colonial Other also allows actually diverse local populations to sustain an illusion of relative homogeneity over against the hegemonic foreigner, adding to incipient "national" cohesion.

In the post-colonial period, however, this achieved unity sometimes breaks down and internal contestation mounts among the new nation's diverse populations. Secessionist struggles may break out, as among Northerners and Southerners in post-colonial Nigeria. Or excluded status groups and classes may appeal to nativist religious symbols in order to challenge entrenched post-colonial elites, as the bazaar classes employed a Khomeinist reformulation of Shi'i Islam against the "secularizing" big bourgeoisie of the Shah's Iran (similar phenomena have appeared in India, Algeria, and, to a limited extent, Uzbekistan). Or the national heritage may be further differentiated so that the lines of self and other are redrawn. In the anti-colonial phase of the Indian struggle for independence, the glories of the Taj Mahal were invoked even by Hindus as evidence of past Indian national glory, whereas in the 1990s in independent India we have seen powerful Hindu groups call for the demolition of such Muslim monuments as themselves remnants of an alien domination. The continuing importance of the colonial legacy to the shaping of the modern nation raises severe problems of identity in the context of a nationalism that most often depicts itself as a pure nativism (this is clear with the continued importance of French and French culture

among the middle and upper classes in Algeria, and of Russian and Russian culture among the same classes in Central Asia).

The advent of large-scale industrialization (usually light industries or industries associated with high-priced primary commodities such as petroleum) from about 1960 typifies the post-colonial period in the Middle East. Some countries with the reality or expectation of high incomes from rents on primary commodities, such as Iran and Iraq, have gained sufficient independence from the international community to strike out on their own and develop authoritarian populist regimes with proven potential for mass mobilization that are unwelcome to the great powers. The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of the old Soviet Socialist Republics of Central Asia as independent nation-states, which have complex relationships with Moscow. Nation-building in the global South has seen remarkable achievements and successes. Still, the horrible genocides perpetrated on Iraqi Shi'is and Kurds by the Ba'athist regime in Iraq, the massacres of Shi'is and Tajiks by the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Bosnian civil war, the civil war in Tajikistan, and the Ayodhya and Bombay massacres of Muslims in India stand as reminders of how the post-colonial national imagination can turn, just as had some European nationalisms, toward dark fantasies of ethnic hegemony and even homogenization. The post-colonial regimes often have been characterized by domination by a narrow "public" that throws up the primary political elite. The emergence of subaltern counter-publics, which has so shaken the Congress Party's dominance in India and which roiled Turkish politics when Islamists captured the prime ministership in the late 1990s, have challenged the post-colonial order. The Central Asian states, with the partial exception of Kyrgyzstan, have so far witnessed little in the way of genuine democracy, and the continued traditions of authoritarianism rooted in Soviet bureaucratic practice have sometimes led to dissidence on the part of those who feel themselves disfranchised. How national elites deal with these developments will help determine the continued salience of the national idea as it is embodied in the status quo in the global South.

The authors represented in this issue explore the implications of the colonial legacy for the formation of national consciousness in the Middle East and Central Asia. We begin with the colonial period, and with an essay by Sami Zubaida that examines the case of Iraq. Zubaida points to the disparate communities inhabiting the three provinces of the Tigris–Euphrates river valley under the Ottomans, with divisions among and within Sunnis and Shi'is, Arabs and Kurds. Zubaida queries the proposition, put forward by Anderson, that the particularist nation in many ways replaces and displaces a universal religion. He points out that Iraq did not have a single such religious identity in Ottoman times in any case, and once an Iraq came into existence via British colonial conquest and border-drawing, religion continued to be "articulated onto" the nation and entered "the field of nationalist contestations." Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi broaches issues in the gendered representation of the nation in late-19th- and early-20th-century Iran, which, although it was not formally colonized, labored under imperial incursions under the rubric of Great Power demarcations of spheres of influence. He finds a powerful appeal to the homeland as mother, but a mother who has been violated by strangers—either raped or infected with debilitating diseases—from which her children must deliver her. If Zubaida's post-colonial Iraqis felt they had a

state but no strong, unified nation, Tavakoli-Targhi's Iranian intellectuals have by the turn of the 19th-century imagined a 6,000-year-old (!) "matriotic" nation that lacks a strong state to care for her.

The articles by Abdurakhimova and Kamp consider aspects of identity formation in modern Central Asia, treating in turn the czarist colonial and then the early Soviet periods. Abdurakhimova challenges the tendency of Soviet and Russian historians to continue to code as "progressive" the colonial conquests and administration of what is now Uzbekistan and parts of Kazakhstan in the 19th and early 20th centuries. She instead draws from the archives a detailed picture of a repressive colonial state apparatus, invidious in its workings and arranged primarily for the convenience of Russian administrators and settlers while exploiting the local Central Asian population. Abdurakhimova questions those Soviet historians who depicted a progressive Russian imperialism in the region while casting the local population in the role of benighted "traditionalists" mired in primordial identities and reactionary social institutions. She shows how, by 1916, Muslim democratic constitutionalists in the region had risen against czarist absolutism, only to be put down by anti-democratic Russian Bolsheviks in 1918. Significantly for the themes of this issue, it is certain that a local scholar such as Abdurakhimova would not have been able to express herself in these terms in the Soviet period.

Kamp reinforces the main outlines of Abdurakhimova's argument about the colonial period in Turkestan, but goes on to examine the role of gender symbolism and unveiling in the formation of a specifically Uzbek proto-national identity in the early Soviet period. She points to the key decision of Soviet policy-makers to divide Turkestan and other Central Asian possessions into five Soviet republics on the basis of the predominance in the region of a particular ethnic group (understood through the lens of Russian ethnography). One such was the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan, grouping parts of the old Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand Muslim principalities and consisting of both Turkic-speaking and Persian-speaking people (the latter constituting about a third of the population, though their distinctiveness was somewhat muted as they became largely bilingual in Uzbek). Kamp argues that new state schools and universities and the staffing of Soviet state institutions at some levels by Central Asians trained in those schools helped transform the Central Asians over time into civil servants of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan, encouraging both men and women to adopt the official languages of Uzbek and Russian rather than their native Turkic dialects in order to gain that lucrative state employment. In addition, she points to the importance of the Communist Party's campaign (*hujum*) against the veiling of Uzbek and Tajik women, which had been a key marker of status in middle- and upper-class urban Muslim families in places such as Bukhara and Samarkand. Mass public unveilings were carried out as part of a nation-building Uzbek project. The party's campaign met enormous resistance, including violence, but the very struggle contributed to the forging among both women and men of a new imagined community of Uzbeks (understood as a consciousness of Uzbeks, Tajiks, and other ethnic groups living in the Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic of having a common political identity within the Soviet system). Ironically, the universal, class-based ideology of Soviet Marxism served as midwife to the cobbling together of a new set of nationalisms.

The second half of this issue moves on to address the continued and various pro-

cesses of nation-making in the post-colonial era, concentrating on Afghanistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Kandiyoti begins this section with an overview of the debates on post-coloniality, pointing to the distinction in the literature between the latter as a historical epoch and post-colonialism as a particular form of intellectual inquiry. The latter in turn has been subdivided into post-colonial criticism, characterizing the work of anti-imperialist intellectuals who critique the colonial legacy in a political and common-sense style, and post-colonial theory, which employs European-derived high theory to analyze “colonial systems of representation and cultural production.” In all cases, the perspective of the post-colony seeks to displace Europe from its privileged role as the protagonist of modernity with which the social scientist tends to identify, and to restore the voice of the colonized to center stage. Kandiyoti points to the often unstated influence of modernization theory, in both Western and Soviet social science, on the debates on the impact of colonialism. She suggests that the increasingly obvious inadequacies of this developmental paradigm were among the impetuses to the achievement of a new perspective that was not similarly mired in the barren binary oppositions of East–West, tradition–modernity, and indigenous–foreign. She echoes, however, Stuart Hall’s warning that post-coloniality not be erected as a monochromatic conception demolishing significant differences among colonial and post-colonial experiences, and she points at length to the ways in which the Soviet project in Central Asia complicates any simple narrative typology of “Western” and “colonial” domination of non-Westerners.

The late Anthony Hyman’s article analyzes the nationalist conundrums of Afghanistan, which experienced both informal British colonial domination in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and an attempt formally to incorporate it into the Soviet project in the 1980s. The latter was thwarted by a full-scale civil war of immense destructiveness and by the rise of a number of discrete and warring Islamist ideologies, one of which—that of the Taliban—became hegemonic by the late 1990s. Hyman stresses that Afghan national consciousness is weak and fragmented (as one might expect, given the weakness and instability in the country at the state level) but points to the ironic ways in which the threat of disintegration in the 1990s had by the end of that decade reinforced nationalist commitments even among troubled minorities. Hyman did not live to see the U.S.-Afghan War that began in 2001, but his overall conclusions about the continued salience of Afghan nationalism in the face of deep political, ideological, religious, and clan divisions seemed undisturbed when this issue went to press.

A different sort of breakdown is analyzed by Alisher Ilkhamov, who argues that the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of units such as independent Uzbekistan were rooted in two levels of conflict. At the level of the political elites, a competition existed between all-Soviet economic managerial elites and those Soviet politicians who were instead rooted in the specific republics of the union. The elites in the republics had come into being during a wave of indigenization that began in the 1960s, but they had been permitted, by oversight or design, to develop local power bases and networks of clientelage and so to become far more independent of the Soviet center than such regional party officials previously had been. When the latter saw that the Soviet Union was experiencing a profound economic crisis of stagnation, they employed their new-found control of “local police, law courts, mass media,” and “industrial sectors” to make a successful bid for independence from the faltering cen-

ter. The other level of his analysis involves looking at the precise political groupings, as revealed by polling, that existed in post-Soviet Uzbekistan in particular and which contributed to the formation of a new political culture there. He found four such major tendencies in the 1990s: the working-class socialists (nostalgic for the Soviet Union); religious and ethnic traditionalists (those, mainly characterized by low levels of Soviet education, who wished to revive and reinforce Islamic customs); cosmopolitan socialists of the middle class who missed the Soviet Union; and the liberal–dissident subculture, which played a major role in challenging and dismantling the Soviet system in Russia and some other areas, but which had remained much weaker in Uzbekistan. Different republics saw different outcomes, but in much of Central Asia the local party elites transformed themselves into national leaders, and, lacking support from the weak dissident–liberal stratum, erected “semi-liberal authoritarian regimes.” Interestingly, Ilkhamov locates the genealogy of a state such as Uzbekistan neither in ethnogenesis nor in Soviet-style class-conflict theory but, rather, in a sophisticated analysis of the competition of various sorts of elite political actors with varying power bases, in the contradictions between center and periphery in the 1980s, and in the presence or absence of grass-roots partners for or competitors with the local political elites among dissidents, socialists, or religious nationalists.

Büşra Ersanlı examines the role of history textbooks in the creation of Turkish and Uzbek nationalisms, a role we should expect to be central if Zubaida and others are correct about the centrality of the state to the making of the nation. Her analysis gains saliency from her comparative approach to two areas where Turkic languages predominated. She closely relates the changing form of the state to the depictions of the past in both countries. In the 1930s, when Turkey was a Republican, secularist, authoritarian single-party regime, the textbooks attempted to downplay the centrality of the Ottoman Empire and its official Islam to Turkish identity, emphasizing instead the putative Central Asian ethnic origins of the inhabitants of Anatolia and attempting to elevate the Turkish language to the position of the primordial tongue from which all other languages derived. In the 1990s, Turkey moved fitfully toward a more inclusive parliamentary system of governance in which even Islamists became partners in government, and textbooks began acknowledging Ottoman history, though the history of the Republican period continues to ignore “the plurality of political, social, economic, cultural, and ethnic life” after 1945. In Uzbekistan, Ersanlı finds, the importance of the pre-modern Muslim emirates and khanates was downplayed in the textbooks of the Soviet period, which concentrated on the modes of production presumed to have thrown them up, and a predominant place was given to the “Russian–Soviet cultural political formation” (something we have been prepared for by Abdurakhimova). After independence, a struggle took place between those who wished to continue to write textbooks in the old Soviet style and those who wanted to concentrate more on Uzbek history. The latter won out, though most managed, she says, to avoid what would have been called “chauvinist” glorification of the Uzbeks at the expense of other Turkic peoples, and a Pan-Turkist line is apparent in some. A new emphasis on the importance of the Jadid Muslim reformist movement of the first fifth of the 20th century as the genealogy of Uzbek modernism is now apparent. Ersanlı’s analysis of shifting historiographical emphases is complemented by Tchorev’s chapter on the historiography of post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan, which traces the steps away from Marxist–

Leninist approaches to greater focus on Kyrgyz cultural heritage (as in the vast epic, the *Manas*), and the struggles over how progressive the Russian colonial period had been. In particular, he notes the reinterpretation of materials pertaining to early statehood experiences of the Kyrgyz, a re-reading of their ethnic history, and the rehabilitation of national figures previously maligned as “reactionaries” by the Soviet political and scientific establishment.

NOTES

¹Among the more important contributors to these debates have been Eric Hobsbawm, Miroslav Hroch, Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith, Benedict Anderson, Partha Chatterjee, and Prasenjit Duara.

²Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993 [1986]); idem., *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

³Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*; Homi Bhaba, “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Partha Chatterjee (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1990), 300–303.

⁴Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

⁵Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

⁶Sami Zubaida, “Nations: Old and New,” *Racial and Ethnic Studies* 12 (1989): 329–39.

⁷Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 23.

⁸Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983), 8–18.

⁹To give another example, at the time of Italian unification only about 2.5 percent of the population knew standard literary Italian: Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*.

¹⁰Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹¹Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 8–52; see also his reply to Hroch in *Encounters with Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 182–200.

¹²Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 14.

¹³Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 52–56.

¹⁴Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, and Reeve S. Simon, ed., *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), and James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni, ed., *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

¹⁵Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 55–56.

¹⁶See, for instance, Ron Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1993); Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and the sources cited in Deniz Kandiyoti, “Post-colonialism Compared: Potentials and Limitations in the Middle East and Central Asia,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 34 (2002): 279–97.

¹⁷Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; for a clear discussion of the differences between Gellner and Anderson, see Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought*.