



Democracy, Nationalism and Culture: A Social Critique of Liberal Monoculturalism

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Abstract

Does liberal democracy provide an ideal framework for solving nationalist disputes? Or is rather democracy more conducive to nationalism and conflict? No definitive answer can be given to this broadly formulated question. However, the trend in the scholarly literature has recently pointed towards the latter direction. This article first introduces the 'demo-skeptical turn', which has emerged across disciplines in the study of democratic transitions. It then relates this to an understudied area – cultural homogenization. A social history of cultural homogenization remains yet to be written, but its historical impact is so overwhelming that its key features need to be studied on its own. This is, in turn, related to mainstream concepts of majoritarian liberal democracy.

The relationship between democracy and nationalism has become one of the most hotly debated issues in the current sociopolitical literature. Yet, its implications remain insufficiently studied in sociology and other social sciences. Particularly undertheorized are the multiple links between liberal democracy, nationalism and the specific ways in which state-making has evolved across Europe, that is, as a practice of centralization, cultural homogenization and the imposition of uniform laws, customs and culture.

Let's start by delineating in broad sketches the two poles of the debate, identifying them as the *demo-optimists* and the *demo-skeptics*. Of course, such an opposition can only be anecdotal: many political philosophers would not identify themselves with either camp. My scope is more simply to underline some recent changes in the values attributed to democracy (or democratization) contextualizing such a change as a reaction to previously optimistic assumptions. In short, *demo-optimists* tend to see the virtues of democracy as a sort of panacea to all evils. Until 2001 at least, many believed that globalization presaged a new Kantian era of 'perpetual peace'. Indeed, corporate pundits and the very marketing strategy of multinational corporations have tended to promote precisely the vision of a neoliberal free-market paradise protected by the laws of unrestrained market competition. In political science, one specific version of this approach has thrived in the 1990s, namely, *democratic peace theory* (or

theory of the *democratic peace*) arguing that 'liberal democracies' almost never go to war with one another and, in general, are less likely than other regimes to engage in international and internal conflicts.¹

The *demo-skeptical* turn

Yet, most empirical indicators have long pointed to the opposite trend, namely that as democratization expands, nationalism and ethnic conflict also expand. Therefore, *demo-optimist* views have come under attack. In the mean time, those approaches positively linking globalization with the spread of liberal democracy have been demolished beyond repair: for instance, the 1990s fade of *globalization theory* has been reversed on its head by both international events (9/11 and the 'War on Terror') and by new scholarly studies²: evidence is accumulating rapidly to confirm that unrestrained globalization is already leading to the spread of new radical confrontational ideologies and potentially insoluble conflicts. These include the expansion of anti-McWorld movements, through stages of global 'anarchy' and chaos (Barber 1996), the rise of a diasporic 'global Islam' against both traditional Islam and Americanization (Roy 2004), the diffusion of ethnic conflict throughout the globe (Chua 2003) and even genocide (Mann 2005).³ Some authors go as far as claiming that US-style globalization not only leads to global conflict and war (Barber 1996), it is actually a form of war in itself (Barkawi 2006; see Drake 2007). This also implies that countries that refuse to partake in the US-led globalization process are very likely to be either marginalized or become targets of military aggression. The events ensuing the self-defeating 'War on Terror' inaugurated by the US attack on Afghanistan in October 2001 have led to profound disillusionment with democracy throughout the world, more specifically with the American model of democracy.

The critique of globalization is obviously much more credible and respected than the critique of democracy. Yet the two are often confused, mostly because Western policy-makers have tended to take for granted that liberal democracy and globalization are marching in tandem. It is obviously necessary to distinguish the two, because globalization is not the same as either liberalism or democracy. For instance, despite playing a pivotal role in US-led globalization, China can hardly be described as a democracy.

The term *demo-skepticism* (Conversi 2006) is used here to distinguish this contemporary trend from erstwhile anti-democratic thought. All the authors considered here share little in common with early twentieth-century aversion to parliamentary politics. There is very limited common ground between them and elitists like Pareto and Mosca, who notoriously inspired extreme Italian nationalism and fascism. In fact, *demo-skeptics* profess a certain disillusion with common patterns of majoritarian democracy, yet most of them are not critical of, or adverse to, democracy per se. The

critique is rather moved to the current incapacity of liberal democracies to tackle a series of issues, from corporate unaccountability to terrorism and ethnic conflict, from the attack on civil liberties to global warming. The critique becomes even more meaningful when it emerges from within the liberal field (see Gray 1998, for an early warning analysis). In fact, the attack on neoliberalism is not really an attack on liberalism and liberal values, since various liberal luminaries (Benjamin Barber, John Gray, George Soros) have joined the critics' spectrum. From another angle, Marxist-oriented scholars argue that it is the intrinsic imperialist nature of US-led globalization that is accountable for many deficiencies in the democratization process (Robinson 1996). For instance, Wood (2003) describes neoliberalism as a 'totalizing' global order intent on destroying the planet and its inhabitants at an unprecedented pace. The brave new world of capitalist consumerism is promoted at the expenses of social stability, peace and human rights. Corporate powers have subverted state institutions ushering us into an ominous post-democratic era (Crouch 2004). Some scholars argue that even the promotion of human rights rhetoric can actually damage interethnic and infra-state relations (Snyder 2000). Finally, others have identified majoritarian democracies as providing a fertile ground for ethnic cleansing and genocide (Mann 2005).

What is common to all these authors is the view that US-style democracy no longer functions in a whole set of areas, either because it cannot be exported wholesale, especially by military means (Encarnación 2005), or because the very notion that the USA still remains a 'model' democracy at home has been seriously questioned since 2001 (Lieven 2004; Wolf 2007; Wolfe 2006). Once reframed as the global 'War on Terror', globalization has in fact become a 'global war on liberty' (Paye 2007). Others, like Dennis Smith, argue that globalization's long-term costs can be devastating in terms of freedom and human rights: globalization is 'stirring up a tide of global resentment held back by fear of American military power. When that power falters, the revenge of the humiliated world will strike the West' (Smith 2006, 1). All this is in sharp contrast with the more conservative neoliberal views dominating in the 1990s that US-style democracy can be, and should be, exported (see Hadenius 1997).

The *demo-skeptical* argument becomes particularly convincing when tackling the issue of global warming. It is highly unlikely that current democratic institutions can hold in front of the social upheavals brought about by climate change as predicted by environmental scientists (Shearman and Smith 2007). Yet, a debate on the effects of global warming has not yet seriously begun within the social sciences. Just to limit us to nationalism, patriotism and ethnic conflict, the rapidly growing tide of climate refugees is already threatening the stability of many developing countries, like Sudan and Ethiopia. It is unrealistic to think that, even in the short term, the richest counties will remain untouched, not to speak about the

long-term consequences. Some authors in this area are still optimistic about the survival of democracy, at least at a supranational level. Writing in 2000, Barry Holden argued that a problem of cataclysmic proportion like global warming could only be addressed by a new form of *cosmopolitan democracy*: since a global response of such magnitude can hardly be generated in a world of sovereign states, he rejects the classical liberal paradigm that democracy must occur within bounded states (Holden 2002). But more recent analyses have turned increasingly pessimistic and many now doubt that democracy can survive once nature will begin to wreak havoc on our weak social structures already undermined by globalization (Shearman and Smith 2007). In short, the impact of climate change promises to be a serious area for the growth of demo-skeptical views. But the available literature is still very scarce.

There is, however, an area that has proven to be particularly prolific in dismantling long established neo-Kantian ideas about the imminent decline of national conflicts. This is the largely interdisciplinary field of '*nationalism studies*', elsewhere, as in the USA, referred to as *ethnopolitics* or '*ethnic conflict*' studies (Kaufmann and Conversi forthcoming 2008). The collapse of European Communism has led to a generalized awareness that democratization, or failed democratization, is often at the root of particularly brutal forms of ethnic conflict and intrastate wars. Since Yugoslavia's disintegration, conflicts in the Caucasus, the rise of Russian and Chinese patriotism, genocide in Rwanda and East Timor, and the spread of civil strife throughout Africa and parts of Asia, political and social scientists can hardly ignore the power of ethnonationalism. Its negative linkage with democratization, voting and electoral turnouts has been discussed and theorized in a recent, but prolific, body of literature (see Mansfield and Snyder 2005). Within historical and political sociology, Michael Mann's milestone work on genocide *The Dark Side of Democracy* argues that most twentieth-century episodes of ethnic cleansing can be related to stalled democratization through a complex interaction between majority rule and 'cumulative radicalization'. The book is not a critique of democracy or even democratization processes, but remains a critique to the homogenizing ways of modern liberal democracy, and the way it has been exported worldwide. To be true, already by the mid-1990s, some authors had warned: 'the avowedly democratic surfers might not have had the same beach in mind as a destination. Part of the problem lies in our unfortunate habit of equating "democracy" with "modern, representative, liberal, political democracy as practiced within nation-states"' (Schmitter 1995, 15–16). Doyle and Sambannis also note how 'since the end of the Cold War, almost all new armed conflicts have occurred within the territories of sovereign states' (2006, 3).

The next section briefly assesses those liberal theories predicating the need for cultural and ethnic homogeneity in the development of the

modern state. From Mill to Gellner, via Marx and Pareto and the elitists, we find a common thread uniting liberal, illiberal and anti-liberal political philosophers. Typically, this view argued that the modern state needs to be 'homogeneous' to be smoothly run. The trend expanded in the age of nationalism triumphant, culminating in the years of European fascism between 1914 and 1945. It receded in the post-war years, only to re-emerge after the Cold War. Since the 1990s, the Medusa's heads have regenerated themselves here and there in various countries, notably in former Yugoslavia. Because these countries are very often passing through a transitional period from autocracy to democracy, this explains why much demo-skeptical literature has dealt with both democratic transitions (Mansfield and Snyder 2005) and ethnic conflict (Chua 2003; Paris 2004; Snyder 2000).

I argue that the recent demo-skeptical debate about whether democracy encourages or discourages intrastate and interstate conflict should be reframed through a cultural prism. The confusion between the *demos* and the *ethnos* (Mann 2005) and the consequent tendency of all modern nation-states to resemble *ethnocracies* (Yiftachel and Ghanem 2004) derive from the state's negation of internal pluralism through 'negative' patriotism. *Negative patriotism* is an etatist ideology that denies otherness, particularly ethnic otherness, among its citizens. It tends to destroy culture, rather than preserving it, as often claimed by nationalists. This model prevailed in Europe from the French revolution to World War II.

At least one critique can be anticipated to the demo-skeptical view: when dealing with ethnic conflict, many demo-skeptics seem oblivious to the fact that violence is intrinsically incompatible with democracy (Keane 2004). In fact, they deal with *de-democratization*, rather than democracy per se, or simply failed democratization. My approach is broader: not only violence is incompatible with democracy; it is also incompatible with culture. Therefore, cultural destruction and homogenization are deeply intermeshed with war, mass violence, militarism and violent upheavals (Conversi 2007a,b). Taken together, state-led industrialization, compulsory education and enforced military service have fostered a radical negation of otherness or, as Ernest Gellner (2006) would say, 'counter-entropic' human elements.⁴

The idea that the nation-state requires some sort of internal homogeneity to be properly run has been traditionally shared by many Liberals. Kymlicka underlines that 'the alleged need for a common national identity ... has been raised again and again throughout the liberal tradition' (1995, 52), and yet in the nineteenth century, this 'call for a common national identity was often tied to an ethnocentric denigration of smaller national groups' (1995, 53). He notes that a parallel liberal tradition of respect for cultural diversity has been submerged both by historical events (the rise of state nationalism) and by the absolute dominance of liberal monoculturalism.

Liberal monoculturalism

In the West, both Liberals and Marxists failed to deal with the problem of ethnic dissent. For both theories, the empirical referent was provided by the nation-state, whose educational, industrial and military power was harnessed to enforce cultural homogeneity upon entire populations. With wisdom of insight, one can claim that this project was a dismal failure in terms of international security, human rights and the maintenance of peace. Liberal monoculturalism and its pitfalls have been already dissected by political philosophers, notably the 'multicultural' school (see Kymlicka 1995, Kymlicka and Patten 2003). Here, the discourse will be tackled from a more sociopolitical angle.

Chief among the 'monocultural' liberals was John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), who argued in 1861: 'It is in general a necessary condition of free institutions that the boundaries of government should coincide in the main with those of nationalities' (Mill 1875, 298, as cited in Acton 1919, 285). A penetrating critique of this vision comes from Walker Connor, who rightly observed how Stuart Mill's deliberations were 'predicated upon his fear of despotic government, for he believed that a multinational population would invite authoritarianism by lending itself to a divide-and-rule technique' (Connor 1972, 1993, 28–66, 2004). In other words, different populations within a state would be mired in mutual rivalries thereupon allowing the state to concentrate power by undemocratic means. We understood too late that the reverse is true: internal fragmentation has been detrimental to democracy, not because of its intrinsic nature, but rather because of its denial by state elites. In fact, many European states have radically centralized their power and culture precisely to overcome the potential 'fragmentation' stemming from internal variety and the alleged threat it represented to 'national security'. As we shall see, external and internal threats have been used by authoritarian regimes as pretexts to impose central authority. Instead of 'lending itself to a divide-and-rule technique', authoritarian and totalitarian regimes have simply centralized power in their hands further and further. They have usually done so by conjuring up major threats to the sacred unity of the fatherland produced by allegedly divisive, separatist and 'anarchical' forces.

Mill was possibly the greatest philosophical influence on Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924), the architect of the post-World War I's international order (Wilson 1918). This was predicated on the principle of national self-determination, which also inaugurated the 'American century'. First among Woodrow Wilson's 14 Points was 'the removal ... of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions' to the understandable benefit of US market expansion. As for rival empires, the points mandated 'a free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty the interests

of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined'. This sentence encapsulates the principle of self-determination. More specifically, it recommended 'a readjustment of the frontiers of Italy... along clearly recognizable *lines of nationality*' (my emphasis), a principle that was later bolstered by Fascism. The 14 points also prescribed that 'Serbia [should be] accorded free and secure access to the sea', meaning that it should incorporate Bosnia, Montenegro and eventually expanding its control over the entire Yugoslav state as this was being conceived on the road to Versailles (1918–1919). On the other hand, 'the peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development'. The 'nationalities ... under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development'. This precept came too late for the Armenians as a whole, because most of them had been 'preemptively' exterminated by Turkish troops and paramilitary, while the establishment of a Kurdish state was nullified by the ensuing diplomatic tricks (Eskander 2000). Wilson's points also recognized the need to establish 'an independent Polish state [which] ... should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations'. This was a largely absurd and impractical proposition, given the high level of ethnic intermixing in the area and, hence, a recipe for further ethnic cleansing. All these changes began to undo the rich and tattered fabric of European and Ottoman multi-ethnic, multi-religious coexistence.

According to the broader self-determination ideals underpinning the 14 points, the boundaries of new states should be made congruent with 'existing' ethnonational divisions. In other words, each self-determined unit should be as more homogeneous as possible, while oppressed minorities should be, wherever feasible, granted their own right to self-determination. Although the original idea was to create a more stable world order, the effect was the opposite: Wilson's points ushered an exponential increase of European disorder, since all newly created state entities included numerous minorities in their midst. The resulting convulsion was very propitious for the consolidation of the USA as the hegemonical power in Europe and, hence, in the world. Some of the newly established states, like Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia (both established in 1918) even lacked clear majorities – indeed the number of Germans in the first Czechoslovakia exceeded the number of Slovaks. In most of these countries the presence of minorities, especially Germans and Hungarians, led to their exploitation by expanding irredentist movements and fascist regimes. In particular, Italian, German and Hungarian irredentists wished to apply the very Wilsonian principles of self-determination to 'their' minorities on a strict ethnic basis. They strove to redeem and reunite the entire ethnic diasporas and *irredenta* within their respective *Heimaten*.

Because Wilson's principles owed much to British Liberal thought, particularly John Stuart Mill (Martin 1958), it is necessary to briefly restate the latter's influence on coeval political developments. Reinforced by broader sociopolitical developments, the liberal 'one nation—one state' principle became an influential force in Eastern Europe during the period of state-building, just as German ethnicism and French Jacobinism were providing the main practical models for nationalist mobilization. Mill was widely read and translated among nationalists and patriots in most of Europe's nationalizing states. For instance, 'liberal' Serbian nationalists contributed to diffuse Mill's work already by the mid-nineteenth century. As a young student (1868), the reformist King Petar I Karadjordjevic (r. 1903–1918 and 1918–1921) had personally translated Mill's *On Liberty* into Serbian (Anzulovic 1999; Cviic 1999). In general, liberal mono-culturalism was seized by the 'progressive' avantgarde of political movements and state elites that then became ethnically exclusive, irredentist and expansionist.

The liberal critique

The liberal historian of ideas Lord Acton (1834–1902) exposed Mill's blunder by arguing precisely the contrary, that authoritarian rule is in fact facilitated by homogeneity (Acton 1919). Acton also associated nationalism with democracy:

The real cause of the energy which the national theory has acquired is, however, the triumph of the democratic principle ... The theory of nationality is involved in the democratic theory of the sovereignty of the general will ... To have a collective will, unity is necessary, and independence is requisite in order to assert it ... [A] nation inspired by the democratic idea cannot with consistency allow a part of itself to belong to a foreign State. (1919, 287)

Acton's polemics against Mill have been well explored by Connor (1993), so I shall only look at the broader social implications and their linkage with the issue of democracy and representativity. There is a vast array of ammunition available to support Acton's case (Lang 2002; Massey 1969) and I shall briefly indicate some of it. The goal is again to link this to the more recent 'democratization and nationalism' debate. But before that we need to explore the mirror-like linkage between nationalism and authoritarianism/totalitarianism.

Of course, totalitarianism (and most often authoritarianism) implies an active policy of ideological and cultural homogenization, as part of a broader strategy of control over the economy and public opinion. *Homogenization* is a top-down process involving legal sanctions against cultural dissidents often culminating in selective mass violence. In contrast, as we shall see, some forms of *homogeneity* may pre-exist the imposition of a centralized bureaucracy and education system, as a sort of accomplished fact. Homogeneity may or may not be the end product of state policies.

There are cases where the existence of a relatively homogeneous society, at least in terms of shared 'high culture', preceded the advent of the modern nation-state. In these cases, authoritarianism classically did not prevail. Denmark, Sweden and Iceland became linguistically homogeneous before the era of nationalism and are known for their remarkable democratic stability. Homogenization may not necessarily lead to totalitarianism or authoritarianism. Yet, the latter typically emerge in the process of trying to *impose* homogeneity upon heterogeneity. In practice, this has become the hallmark of twentieth-century politics. To resume, we can more easily identify a closer relationship between homogenization and totalitarianism, rather than heterogeneity and authoritarianism as predicted by Mill.

Lord Acton was particularly concerned with the ominous signs of authoritarian centralism evident in Italian nationalism since its inception (Butterfield 1946, Renzi 1968). As we shall see, the Mazzini-Garibaldi model of national liberation ensconced in fact a more authoritarian nucleus that would then be fully exploited by fascism (Baioni 1997, 2006, Banti 2005). Mill's idea that polities that are internally heterogeneous are also intrinsically unstable may only to a certain extent be true, but not in Mill's original sense. On the contrary, it has become a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy: instability and war prevail precisely because Mill's principle can be invoked by the central state to engage in coercion and repression. Mill's axiom that heterogeneity is deleterious to 'national health' has indeed been classically invoked by totalitarian regimes and autocrats worldwide. It has provided a rationale for pulverizing many forms of resistance and opposition, not merely ethnic ones.

However, instability has not been normally overcome by deepening 'nation-building'. On the contrary, the central state's attempt to homogenize cultures has often provoked the reaction of local groups, mobilizing populations against the state. This has historically led to deepening spirals of nationalism and counter-nationalism, some advocating secession, others more centralization, in turn spawning more secessions and counter-centralizations, until the entire continent was engulfed in the worst man-made tragedy in human history. Nation-building 'by the centre' has spawned reactive nation-building 'by the periphery' against that very centre. As exposed by an increasing number of social scientists, pioneered by Connor (1972, 2004) and a few others, it turned out that the key problem was, has been, and still is the homogenizing effect of the nation-state.

Of course, liberal nation-building needs to be distinguished from totalitarian, fascist, illiberal or simply non-liberal nation-building (Kymlicka and Opalski 2001, 54; see also Schmitter 1995). Mill's argument that a shared culture and sense of belonging are more conducive to democratic politics does not necessarily end up in forced homogenization from above. In fact, he never postulated or anticipated the need to forcibly 'homogenize' populations, although that is what actually happened. His statement that a common culture can facilitate democracy does not

inexorably lead to the illiberal nation-building exemplified by fascist regimes.

But Mill failed to fathom that the search for homogeneity could lead, and indeed *led*, to much more internal and international strife, than the acceptance of diversity. It was not heterogeneity per se that steered mankind along this sour path, but its rejection. It was precisely the idea that one can, indeed should, replace heterogeneity with homogeneity that led to the greatest tragedies of the past century. Fascism and Nazism emerged in two countries, Germany and Italy, which became unified from a plethora of previously existing local identities and cultures. The pre-fascist liberal nationalist regimes in both countries had attempted to unify, coalesce and homogenize their diverse populations while marginalizing local cultures as remnants of the past. One should therefore not be surprised that a strong linkage between nationalism and totalitarianism has emerged here. This pursuit of homogeneity was tantamount to refusing and denying reality in favour of a fallacious ideal. It recommended escape from the present as a sacred duty. In most countries, it eventually turned out to be an unworkable pipe dream. The identification of cultural diversity with a vital threat to an organic, wholesome 'national unity' became one of the key ingredients in the totalitarian ideologies and systems that emerged in post-World War I Germany and Italy. As John Keane notes, 'fascism was both paranoid and obsessed with unifying the body politic through the controlling, cleansing and healing effects of violence, which was often understood through "medical" or "surgical" metaphors' (2004, 2).

One of the rationales underpinning cultural engineering was a misplaced cost-benefit analysis equating homogenization with modernity. Of course, homogeneity is far from being an absolute prerequisite for modernization and industrialization. Even in Europe, many states have modernized without renouncing cultural pluralism and their internal variety. Moreover, not all forms of nationalism have embraced modernity while fostering cultural homogenization. Smith (1991, 1998) has pointed out that nations should not necessarily be conceived as pure, centralized and homogenized. Some nations evince a sturdy sense of national identity, yet are keenly pluralistic and multi-ethnic, the archetype being Switzerland (McRae 1983; Schmid 1981). In fact, Switzerland has been identified as the historical exception in a world of autocratic states (Schmitter 2003). Finland has also modernized while avoiding cultural homogenization: since 1921, the Åland (Åland) Islands enjoy one of the most advanced and liberal statutes of regional autonomy in Europe, while the cultural rights of its Swedish minority are recognized throughout Finland's territory (Paasi 1997). Elsewhere, homogenization has been carried out more slowly, irregularly and surreptitiously than elsewhere: Britain's periodical attempts to impose common laws and the English language upon its Celtic fringe have been carried out less ruthlessly and systematically than in the continent, indeed

allowing periodical revivals (Cormack 2000). During the twentieth century, Spanish elites attempted to impose cultural homogenization much more fiercely, but it backfired and Spain remains to this day a plurinational state (Conversi 1997).

Are homogeneous units less likely to engage in wars? Portugal, Iceland and beyond

Admittedly, 'pure' forms of nation-state have rarely, if ever, engaged in either internal or international war. But such historical configurations remain *rara avis*. Possibly two cases can be identified in Europe: Portugal and Iceland. Portugal remained safely outside the major European conflagrations of the 20th century. It undertook a brief imperial conflict around 1974 to hold onto its rebellious African possessions, but this was never fought with much conviction (Magone 1997). Indeed, the unwillingness to preserve the empire led directly to the Carnation Revolution (25 April 1974), the left-inspired military coup that ushered the fall of Salazar's dictatorship (1932–1974). Likewise, Iceland's modern history has been characterized by a persistent state of peace and its very independence (17 June 1944) was achieved without a single gunshot (Hálfðanarson 1995).⁵ Iceland 'has always been unusually homogeneous in cultural terms, speaking a particular and relatively unified language, and professing the same religious creed' (Hálfðanarson 2000, 93). In both cases, it may be argued that it was the stability of boundaries, helped by geographical aloofness and isolation, which did the trick. Thus, 'Icelandic nationalism had the same propensity for violence as any other ethnic nationalism, because its ultimate goal was not negotiable and its inflated rhetoric on the character of the Icelandic nation invited a sense of racial superiority ... It was only when Icelanders began to extend their economic boundaries on the sea that they came into conflict over their territorial borders' (Hálfðanarson 2000, 99–100). Homogeneity may or may not have played a role. Most importantly, internal homogeneity was not the product of any forceful centralizing attempt. It was rather bestowed on these countries by historical legacy and circumstances without much of a fight. In the case of Portugal, it occurred well before modernity and the rise of the assimilationist nation-state (Magone 1997). One could argue whether Portugal at the moment of independence (1640) was as fully homogeneous as we can largely conceive it today. It certainly had plenty of time to solidify its nationhood in the absence of the traditional nationalizing means deployed by modern nation-states. Portuguese identity or Portugueseness was thus a result of the historical flow of events, rather than of any preordained homogenizing attempt or any conscious effort at nation-building. It can be said to stand at the antipodes of the French model, which strove to impose homogeneity upon heterogeneity through internal coercion and external war, helped by revolutionary zeal. Iceland has instead solidified its cultural distinctiveness

and relative 'homogeneity' vis-à-vis the mainland through centuries of relative isolation.

Can the Portuguese and Icelandic examples serve as the basis for some broader generalizations? Outside the European context, we can find similar examples, as well as counterexamples. By international standards, Korea (both North and South) has been identified as the most ethnically 'pure' country in the world, as well as one of the most culturally homogeneous. In fact, its peninsula provided the battling ground for some of the most violent and destructive wars in the twentieth century, including the one that led to the country's partition between North and South (Korean War, 1950–1953).

In contrast, what by the same standards is indicated to be the most heterogeneous country in the world, Tanzania, has since its creation (1964) and until now experienced insignificant levels of ethnic conflict and considerably more sociopolitical stability than all other countries in the region. Of over 120 ethnic groups existing in Tanzania, the majority display great internal cultural variation in terms of dialects, customary laws and ordinary daily practices. With less than 13% of the population (lowest estimate is 9.5% in 2000), the Sukuma are the largest ethnic group. The moderate non-assimilationist policies of the government could explain why Tanzania has been free of major ethnic and other tensions in comparison with most other African states. In contrast, most of the surrounding countries (Congo-Zaire, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique) have experienced protracted periods of ethnic conflict and civil war. Moreover, the only two countries bordering with Tanzania that have a clear demographic majority, Burundi and Rwanda, where the Hutu ethnic group forms, respectively, 80 and 85% of the overall population (2000 and 2002 data), have witnessed the worst genocides in Africa. The case of Rwanda is symptomatic: being one of the most densely populated area in the world (an estimated 296 people per km² in 2002, and a total population of about 7.4 million), most Rwandan citizens have grown unaccustomed at evaluating the positive impact of cultural difference.

In Tanzania, the official use of Swahili or Kiswahili, a 'neutral' language not associated with a particular ethnic group, made the situation easier. President Julius Nyerere (1922–1999) was a prominent advocate of replacing English as Tanzania's official language without provoking ethnic rivalries. Religious affiliation also indicates the lack of a dominant religion, with about 35% following traditional African beliefs, on a *par* with about 35% Muslims and 30% various Christian denominations (2004 data).⁶ Again, this religious 'balance' and heterogeneity, together with the legacy of Nyerere's actively secular politics, can explain the relative peace in the area – although Nyerere has been accused of using the strong arm in the coastal area against political Islamists. As has been argued elsewhere (Connor 1993, 2004), the majority of states in the world resemble Tanzania rather than Portugal or Iceland, in that they include large minorities and, often, no clear majority.

In short, pre-existing homogeneity per se is not normally a negative condition leading to conflict. In fact, it is rather a good predictor of stability and peace. But homogenization is not. As opposed to pre-existing homogeneity, homogenization means in practice an artificial, state-mandated, top-down attempt to impose a homogeneous culture upon a heterogeneous population. This is most likely a predictor of, and conducive to, serious conflict, including ethnopolitical violence. The next section will look at the relationship between cultural homogenization and mass violence.

Homogenization as war

When multi-ethnic and culturally plural states are submitted to relentless nationalizing pressures, they often find themselves in a perpetual state of internal conflict. This frequently led state elites to get involved in external wars as 'distractive' and mass mobilizing devices, as indispensable tools to accomplish revolutionary goals (Knox 2000, 4). Wars are simultaneously directed inwards, against ideological, cultural and ethnic differences, and outwards, since foreign threats and the pursuit of expansionist and colonial aims serve as overarching rationales to 'forge' the nation while controlling dissent. The case of Fascism in the wake of World War I has been widely discussed by modern historians and will be briefly addressed later on.

In more recent times, an archetypal example has been provided by postcolonial Iraq, particularly from the advent of the military Ba'athist regime (1959) to the 'War on Terror' (2001). As an artificial outgrowth of British colonial experiments, the country of Iraq encompassed at least three sociocultural spheres: the Kurdish North, the Shi'a East, and the Sunni South and West (Tripp 2007, 61–65 and 108–47). But before the rise of centralizing pan-Arabism, there was no self-evident trend pointing towards conflict. In other words, we have no reason to believe that these three components would have been naturally and intrinsically inclined to confrontation (Wimmer 2002, 156–95). Instead, the reasons for the conflict should be searched in the process of state-building that accompanied, and occasionally preceded, post-colonial politics since Iraq's independence (1921). In particular the enforced process of 'nation-building' in the name of Arabization began to strain communal relations forcing people apart (Wimmer 2002, 172–80). Since 1958, the Ba'ath Party's obsessive stress on unity produced a 'blowback effect' leading rather to more potential instability and disunity, well concealed under Saddam Hussein's totalitarian rule of terror (Makiya 1993, 1998). The Shi'a majority became a formidable victim of the ruling Sunni minority coming mostly from the Tikrit tribal region holding power in Baghdad.

When inner tensions are turned into international conflicts, the political literature normally refers to this process as *externalization* or *diversionary war* (Gordon 1974; Mayer 1969; Smith 1996). Although the war is declared against an external foe, it is simultaneously waged inside, within the

country. In this way, wars become both 'weapons of mass distraction' and tools for the elimination of internal dissent. Saddam Hussein used his position of US–French–British proxy to launch an attack on Iran: while over 1 million perished 'externally' as a consequence of the war itself, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, from communists to socialists, unions and minority leaders, nationalists and other opponents were tortured and executed (Aburish 2001). The state of war also provided the occasion to launch chemical cyanide attacks on Kurdish villages in the north (Hiltermann 2007; Hirst 1988) and increase the attack on the Southern Marshlands and the Shi'a majority.

Hussein's invasion of Iran and Kuwait during periods of great potential sociopolitical turmoil suggests a classical instance of externalization. Once 'pacified', Iraq would have been unable to achieve meaningful internal consensus without conferring some degree of generous consociational autonomy on its main ethnoregional and religious communities. In fact, it has been controversially argued that the 2005 Iraqi Constitution constitutes the best possible basis upon which Iraqi state integrity can be maintained (O'Leary 2007). However, because ethnic and religious groups are most often mixed, territorial autonomy can only exacerbate conflicts (McGarry 2007). The 2003 Anglo-American invasion dramatically increased these tensions leading to open sectarian, ethnic and ideological warfare, despite the common resistance against US occupation. Indeed, it may be argued that one of the key long-term objectives of the Anglo-American occupation has been to foster an irreconcilable split between Shi'a and Sunni throughout the Muslim world. In turn, President George W. Bush's 'War on Terror', launched during the weakest moment of a debilitated presidency and fought after the most uncertain electoral results in US history, has often been described as an instance of diversionary war.

Dictatorships, both autocratic and totalitarian, have frequently been installed to 'restore' order under the banner of national unity. As a rule, homogenizing 'nation-building' policies enforced on multicultural populations have resulted in parallel 'nation-destroying' practices (Connor 1993), which, in turn, led to further political fragmentation. On the other hand, the more historically fragmented was the polity, the more authoritarian the superimposed system of unitary government grew. Why did fascism specifically emerge in Italy and Germany? As we shall see, one of the key reasons is the similar pattern of state formation that developed in these countries, in which political unity was overlaid on a plethora of formerly independent and semi-independent principalities and republics (Conversi 1999). This will be analysed more in detail in the section on 'unification nationalisms'. However, even the staunchest dictators are cognizant of the inherent instability and limited endurance of such solutions. The response is often to escalate repression unleashing a spiral of terror, a pattern recurrent throughout modern history from the French revolution to Stalinism and Ba'athism.

Incapable of defeating internal opposition and achieving stability, regimes are occasionally tempted to adopt external wars in a last-ditch effort to underpin their legitimacy. This was the case, for instance, of Argentina's General Leopoldo Galtieri and UK's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher over the Falklands Islands war in 1982 (see Arquilla and Rasmussen 2001). Declaring *war* and engaging in international conflict is believed, most often wrongly, to serve the purpose of regime consolidation. In some cases, it has proven to be 'successful': backed by powerful media propaganda, Mussolini's attack on Ethiopia granted him the climax of mass popularity, galvanizing Italian pride in their civilizing mission to 'develop' Abyssinian economy and 'save' Africans from themselves (Labanca 2004, 2005). Again, war acted as a boundary-maker and a binding mechanism for political, economic and cultural elites at home: during the Ethiopian invasion "the regime and the Italian population came closest to a sense of mystic communion, which Mussolini would have liked to be a permanent state of the nation's collective life" (Gentile 2003, 118). Women 'donated gold to the Fatherland' by symbolically discarding their wedding rings and throwing them into a huge bonfire at Roma's *Altare della Patria* (Altar of the Fatherland). The conflict proved to be crucial for the consolidation of fascism.

However, wars can also bring defeat to the war party and to ousting the very regimes that launched them. Thus, Argentina's sanguinary junta (1976–1983) collapsed as a result of defeat in the 72-day long Falklands war. Other recent examples of bankrupt 'diversionary' wars include Iraq versus Iran, Kuwait and Israel; Serbia versus Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo; Ethiopia versus Somalia and Eritrea.

But war is also related to obliteration. The most extreme of human rights crimes, genocide, typically occurs in the wake of wars or under war conditions. The Armenian genocide occurred during World War I, as Turkish elites took advantage of the global cataclysm to eliminate a potential 'fifth column' of the West (Bloxham 2003; Mann 2005; Melson 1992). Similarly, the Holocaust was mostly carried out during Germany's Eastward expansion and subsequent retreat (Fettweis 2003; Levene 2005; Mann 2005). More Kosovars were killed by regular Yugoslav police forces during NATO's bombing in 1999 than before it (Bartolini 2006). This argument about the central role of war in genocide and ethnic cleansing is widely known and reiterated in most of the genocide studies literature (for an overview, see Bartrop 2002; Conversi 2005 and Shaw 2003).

Part of the argument advanced in this article is that externalization wars are more likely to occur when state-building through homogenizing nationalism impinges on the peaceful coexistence of regionally based groups and persistent cultural difference. Externalization is appealing to centralized authoritarian systems as they strive to streamline or uniform plural and multi-cultural societies. 'Externalize' means to 'project', to protrude towards the external world conflicts that are inherently internal.

This expedient is common to many potentially fragmented groups, from the smallest to the largest ones: from the urban gang to radical populists, from guerrilla groups to the imperial superpower. The classical Durkheimian explanation would be that such forms of externalization produce a sense of solidarity that existing (or aspiring) leaders may be unable to achieve otherwise.⁷ Externalization often results in targeting internal and external scapegoats, who become the quintessential whipping boys of diversionary strategies. In other words, the classical *realpolitik* approach maintains that diversion of attention is called for in order to 'distract' from internal divisions and infighting.

In nationalism studies, the fragmentation-solidarity hypothesis has been applied to both state-led and stateless nationalisms. We already mentioned the cases of Fascism and Ba'athism. Among stateless nations, ETA's struggle in the Spanish Basque Country (Conversi 1997), the PKK in Turkey (Entessar 2007), the Irish Republican Army in Northern Ireland (Irvin 1999) and Eritrea's liberation struggle (Tronvoll 1999) all reflect this strategy. This approach has thus been applied to the emergence of radical minority nationalism in areas strongly assimilated into the dominant culture and, hence, internally fragmented (Conversi 1997, 1999). Organicist visions of the nation ignore that a shared culture is not always a source of social cohesion. Recent anthropological studies rather speak of 'fractured resemblance' or the 'politics of resemblance' (Harrison 2002, 2006). Similar findings have also been incorporated into 'conflict resolution' theory (Kriesberg 1998).

Historical examples abound from the French revolution onwards. The French *Girondins* pushed for war against the first coalition (1792) to construct a siege mentality, which led to the first *levée en masse* less than 1 year later. This was in fact a patriotic response to the danger posed by mass defections and desertions (Conversi 2007a,b). The next section explores this development in two paradigmatic cases of war-mongering nationalism as historically developed in Germany and Italy.

Unification nationalisms: The harder path to homogenization

The roots of some of the most extreme form of unitary nationalism are paradoxically to be found in the wish to overcome the fragmentation derived from competing visions of the social order and rival ideas of nationhood. This has much to do with the way modern nationalism developed in Italy and Germany before and after unification.

Breuilly (1993, Chapter 4) has identified *unification nationalism* as a distinctive form of nationalism, with particular attention to the Italian and German cases. *Unification nationalisms* aim to merge politically divided sovereign territories into a greater overarching political unit. Their overriding ambition is to unite a hitherto politically divided 'people' into

a single nation-state. Hence, their goal is the elimination of pre-existing political boundaries between smaller, local or regional semi-sovereign units, such as duchies, principalities and city-states. Breuilly (1993) argues that unification nationalism develops most strongly where the core region to be unified ('the national region') has already evolved statelike features in the past. In the German case, the Confederation, the Customs Union and pre-existing interstate agreements provided a congenial framework for the emergence of unification nationalism. Perhaps a more important condition develops when a single modernizing state (like Prussia or Piedmont) is able to exploit the weaknesses of other states in the nationalizing region.

Unfortunately, this argument has not been developed further, nor its implications have been fully understood. What is missing is an explanation of the distinctive evolution and outcomes of unification nationalisms as opposed to other form of nationalism (separatism, irredentism, etc.). Both Germany and Italy endeavored to build unified nation-states upon a patchwork of formerly independent states, linguistic isoglosses, economic systems and cultural lifestyles (Conversi 1999). Few historians have systematically compared Germany and Italy. Fewer still have noticed the linkage between the original makeup of the two countries and their totalitarian evolution. Knox (2000) has traced precisely such linkage, enriching it with a critique of previously idiosyncratic research overlooking common cultural patterns of nation-state formation. Indeed, the entire unitarian rhetoric arsenal deployed by fascist movements served precisely the purpose of concealing the internal fragmentation of their constituencies. The more fragmented was the territory to be transformed into a single common nation, the more the stress on unity was needed. A closer look at the very symbolism of fascism reveals a true obsession with unity: the *littorio*, the Roman judicial symbol displayed in Fascist emblems and carried in mass demonstrations symbolized 'unity in strength' and so did the very name *fascio* (bundle) (Gentile 2005). In general, a stress on organic uniformity, common ancestry and homogenization was one of the key features of the rise of fascism in many countries. As widely observed by socialist thinkers in prewar Italy, the alternation of nationalist and imperial strategies served the purpose of elite consolidation at a time of rapid social change and dramatically expanding class conflict (see also Hobsbawm 1983). In both anthropology and sociology, broader functionalist explanations have temporarily faded away, although they can still provide useful tools for understanding various aspects of social conflict.

Shortly before the war, William Graham Sumner (1840–1910) observed that 'the relationship of comradeship and peace in the we-group and that of hostility and war towards the others-group are correlated. The exigency of war with outsiders are what make peace inside, lest internal discord should weaken the we-group for war' (Sumner 1979, 12). Sumner's war-prone statement was part and parcel of a widely shared Western imperial *Zeitgeist* that eventually led to World War I. Indeed, it was

representative of the very boundary-building reasoning that ushered the tragedy. It identified a central logic that early twentieth-century states applied in their binding and boundary-enforcing aims. However, Sumner and the diversionary strategists never mention that a stress on the positive effects of internal and external differences can provide an alternative to war. Such a remark would in fact sound incongruous in an era of intrastate competition and pressing conformism.

As Lord Acton had partly anticipated, Risorgimento nationalism slowly but steadily turned into an irredentist, expansionist and imperialist drive. Its broader maximalist agenda was put into practice after the erstwhile romantic intelligentsia had seized the levers of power. The process is far too multifaceted to be described in a theoretical article, but Italian historians have only partially explored the combination of political, cultural and structural trajectories leading to fascism (see Tranfaglia 1973). Italian unification nationalism expanded in consonance with an international environment that prized competition between nations. Soon the European continent became engulfed in warmongering propaganda and jingoist hysteria. Interestingly, it was in Italy, where the population was more reluctant to join the war, that the intellectual elites and the media provided the most articulate and passionate arguments for war through the work of prominent artists, novelists, poets, intellectuals and journalists (d'Orsi 2005). Their entire propaganda efforts aimed at the transformation of a people of peaceful peasants into one of war-ready soldiers prepared to immolate their lives to the cause of the fatherland. This occurred precisely because most Italians were 'pacifists', they did not fully identify with the newly formed (1861) state, and had a deep distrust in their political elites (accompanied, sadly, by an unbelievable trust in the intellectuals and media which manipulated them). World War I has probably been the most traumatic experience in Italian history. In fact, historians of fascism agree that it was the 'cultural and social matrix from which fascist movements were born' (Semelin 2006, 281), as it provided a mass mobilizing experience that preceded and inspired fascism. The post-Jacobin and Napoleonic vision of a 'nation in arms', fully implemented under Mussolini and Hitler, would have been unthinkable before the radically uprooting experience of World War I. Establishing a direct causal nexus between the French revolution and fascism, Knox perceptively writes: 'The Fascist and Nazi dictatorships were children of the age of mass politics' begun in 1789. 'For, as the visionaries of the tumultuous *Assemblée Nationale* that went to war against Europe in 1792–93 dimly perceived, mass politics had changed statecraft forever. It had fused foreign policy and domestic politics' (Knox 2000, 1).

To a certain extent, civic and liberal forms of nationalism can contribute to enhance interclass 'democratic solidarity' (see Mason, 2000). But solidarity-building is also the conceptual blueprint underpinning tyrants throughout modern history. As revolutionary leaders attempt to forge new

societies, ancient and deep-rooted solidarities are dismantled while new ones are shaped *ex-novo*. Benito Mussolini was adamant that the diverse cultures of the Italian peninsula had to be superseded by a superior sense of Italianness. War was to provide the means to this end. War was supposed to transform the Italian peasants into 'Italians', as Weber (1979) has discovered in regard to Frenchmen. He argued that a widespread sense of Frenchness only emerged ensuing World War I. In fact, this had proven to be the case for both victors and losers in World War I. The boundary-building experience of World War I also showed that the 'nationalization of the masses' and psychophysical uprooting did coincide (Mosse 1975). Indeed, 'nation-building' and 'nation-destroying' were nearly coterminous even within the same country (Connor 1972, 1993, 89–117). Later on, the war experience was transformed into the basis of fascism's political programme: Mussolini's 'nation-building' diktats demanded that the peasantry be 'incorporated' into the Italian Nation' and physical violence was to be their entrance ticket (Griffin 1995, 41–2).⁸

Military conscription is a highly attractive centralizing practice during periods of 'nationalization' of the masses. The enormous influence of Carl von Clausewitz (1780–1831) in military affairs testifies to the success of this strategic thinking. Among European elites, the Italian futurists and the fascists were perhaps the most militantly aware in promoting war as a 'nation-building' device: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944) proclaimed the war to be 'the world's only hygiene'. Giovanni Papini (1881–1956) glorified war 'as a source of national renewal' (Griffin 1995, 23–24).⁹ The rabid anti-clerical Fascist Roberto Farinacci (1892–1945) described war as the 'midwife of a New Italian People' (Griffin 1995, 32–34).¹⁰ Benito Mussolini himself coined the term *Trenchocracy* to identify the million-strong horde of dispossessed, disbanded war veterans. The bellic rite of passage transformed them into champions of a new 'noblesse': the pain-filled, terrifying experience of war in the trenches was to be the initiation practice of this new breed of men (Griffin 1995, 71–72).¹¹ But the fascists, the nationalists and the futurists saw violence as a much wider rejuvenating, galvanizing and revitalizing force: its boundary-building role can also explain the centrality of *squadristo* and para-militarism in the rise and consolidation of Fascism. It was these media exploits that exerted a formidable impact on popular consciousness by deeply attracting previously peaceable, unwarlike citizens into the fascist embrace of totalitarian and radical renewal.

Overall, the belief that violence is a 'natural' predisposition of human societies is 'profoundly anti-democratic' (Keane 2004, 8). From this ideological matrix, a social practice emerged arguing that 'communities can be protected from their own violence only by choosing surrogate victims outside themselves' (Keane 2004, 10). This brings us back to our departure point, namely that far from dispensing 'perpetual peace', democracy's alliance with the modern nation-state is founded on shaky

grounds. Therefore, *demo-skeptics* can easily identify the negative linkages between democracy and nationalism. This article has shown the vulnerability of liberal democracy's Faustian bargain with the homogenizing nation-state as historically embraced by most Western liberals and policy-makers. A whole new article would need to be written to explore democracy's partnership with neoliberal globalization, which is probably founded on even more precarious bases.

Conclusions

Democracy and nationalism have largely grown together. Since the French revolution, popular political participation, mass politics and universal suffrage have expanded. So did nationalism, in its multiple forms as either patriotism or ethnic conflict, imperialism or separatism. The process has been accompanied by the intensifying intrusion and invasion of state power. But the state could only operate legitimately while acting 'in the name of the people', that is, by adopting a nationalist vocabulary and a democratic rhetoric.

Most recently, democratic transitions from Communism have resulted in 'fractured democracies', nearly everywhere accompanied by calls for self-determination and patriotic assertion. This has led many observers to question the whole virtue of attempting to export Western style democracy. Similarly, the expansion of globalization has led other scholars to question the very roots of liberal democracy as currently conceived. In political science, the main target of this critique has been the 'democratic peace theory'. There is now an influential body of scholarship claiming that liberal democracy can provide no panacea to many contemporary problems, and that it rather tends to promote ethnic conflict, as well as environmental destruction.

More cynically, we could be forgiven for suspecting that the erstwhile democratization urge is actually halting at the doorsteps of the Arab world. In fact, despite President Bush's official rhetoric, the USA and its allies have been sternly resisting calls for further democratization in the Middle East. Iraq's collapse under US supervision seems to have been constructed in order to prevent homemade democracy from reaching the Arab world. In other words, when democracy clashes with US interests, it is no longer considered a universal value.

One possible problem is that, as classic liberals warned, there is still a tendency to confuse democracy with mass rule. This is may be a dangerous position in an era when public opinion is dominated by the penetration of mass media and these are in turn dominated by uncontrollable corporate interests (Crouch 2004; Herman and Chomsky 1988).

Mill's thoughts on *representative government* and democracy greatly inspired Woodrow Wilson's project of redrawing the map of Europe between 1918 and 1920. The principle of self-determination proclaimed

by the victors of World War I was also rooted in Mill's idea about the benefits allegedly enjoyed by homogeneous or 'congruent' countries. But Mill's argument has been refuted by demonstrating the opposite claim, namely that heterogeneity is not associated with authoritarian rule. Alternative approaches include the influential multicultural perspective advanced by Will Kymlicka and others (Kymlicka 1995; Kymlicka and Opalski 2001; Kymlicka and Patten 2003), which has been dealt here only *en passant* because of its largely normative character.

In a nationalist era, 'democracy', as the rule of the *demos*, is often understood to mean 'ethnocracy', as the rule of the *ethnos* (or nation). The claim that the *demos* and the *ethnos* do often coincide will no doubt make it harder for defenders of 'civic nationalism' to uphold their argument against supporters of 'ethnic nationalism'. At least till 1945, the European experience has been one of uncontested supremacy of the dominant *ethnos*, acting on behalf, and in the name, of the *demos* or people. Once the latter had seized the state, the goal was usually to inculcate a sense of ethnic citizenship by assimilation, through state-controlled agents like the army, compulsory schooling and, most of all, the mass media.

In a postpositivist era, it can be quite hazardous to extrapolate far-reaching conclusions in the form of testable generalizations. Nevertheless, I will attempt to draw some strong deduction from the above: Insofar as ruling elites avoid homogenization attempts, heterogeneous populations do not have to suffer under the yoke of authoritarianism. In contrast, homogenization and the erosion of cultural differences slowly induce majorities to become unfamiliar and feel awkward towards diversity. In an environment unprepared for diversity, diversity becomes problematic. In this way, dominant ethnic groups can become particularly prone to intolerance: individuals who, throughout their life, have been exclusively exposed to, or in contact with, only one variety of lifestyle tend to remain insular, suspicious and exclusive. They are prone to be much less tolerant of any form of diversity (cultural, biological, social, ideological, even environmental). In times of homogenization, suspicion and insecurity replace mutual interest and attraction.

The opposite experience of substantial intercultural contact and exchange (either constant or occasional) can make both groups and individuals more attracted towards broader differences, including differences of opinion. Hence, culturally plural societies tend to score higher on variables such as free speech, human rights and civil liberties. They also tend to be more resistant to dictatorship than monocultural societies. In other words, democracy and cultural difference are inseparable despite the fact that 'politicized' cultural differences can render democratic politics more problematic. Surely, there can be, and there have been, attempts to craft forms of democratic and national solidarity that do not aim at homogenizing all citizens.

Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere (Conversi 2007a), at least one form of homogenization, specifically linguistic standardization, has been a prerequisite for many smoothly running modern societies (Gellner 2006). From a purely utilitarian view, administrative bilingualism has often been rejected on the ground of its impracticality. To use a pragmatic-mechanicist metaphor, you need only one kind of fuel to get an engine going. If you use two kinds of fuel, the engine may well blow up or melt. This metaphor underscores well the rationale underpinning state-induced monolingualism. It was quite a rationalistic account, but a cardinal one in a rationalizing age. Unless one conflates language with culture, a shared language can still allow a considerable degree of cultural diversity.

Finally, this merely functional prerequisite, should not be confused with the ideological matrix I have described so far. As Acton stated, 'liberty provokes diversity, and diversity preserves liberty' (1919, 289). Likewise, the contrary is also true: dictatorship and cultural homogenization tend to co-occur: twentieth-century totalitarian regimes have pursued the absolute homogenization of their citizenry to the point of exterminating *en masse* groups that were seen as 'counter-entropic'. The prescriptive corollary may be that the active conservation of distinct cultures, including arts, skills, *métiers*, norms and world visions, is crucial for both world peace and democracy.

Short Biography

Daniele Conversi received his PhD at the London School of Economics. He taught in the Government departments at Cornell and Syracuse Universities, as well as at the Central European University, Budapest. He is now Senior Lecturer at the University of Lincoln. His current research explores the role of culture in the process of state-building from 1789 to the present day. More specifically, his studies addresses the relationship between nationalism and culture, with particular attention to the concept of cultural homogenization. Related areas include the relationships between nationalism and democracy, globalization, genocide, militarism and war. His books include *The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain*, which has been positively reviewed in nearly 40 international journals (<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/conversi/book.html>), and the edited volume *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World* (<http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/conversi/ethnonat>).

Dr Conversi's other projects include comparative Northern Mediterranean studies; nationalism, ethnicity and culture; war and state-building; boundaries and violence; the international dimensions of Yugoslavia's breakup; asymmetric federalism and ethnic conflict resolution in comparative historical perspective; globalization and the spread of ethnic conflict; and nationalism and cosmopolitanism. His areas of expertise include Spain, Italy, and the former Yugoslavia; theories of nationalism; ethnic conflict resolution;

globalization; comparative politics; and political sociology. A list of selected publications is available at: <http://easyweb.easynet.co.uk/conversi/CV.html>.

Notes

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¹ Doyle (1983) was among the first to theorize this relationship.

² For an early attempt spanning across sociology and international relations, see Rosenberg (2001).

³ Roy (2004) argues that global Salafism, a broader umbrella movement encompassing al-Qaeda, is characterized by deterritorialization, deculturation and a generational gap: The parents' culture is no longer transmitted to their children. Roy also notes that the only correlation with Palestine is that the Palestinians' plight merely provides another arrow in the Salafist quiver to use for the promotion of their 'brand' (see also Gray 2003).

⁴ Gellner (2006, 62–84) called 'counter-entropic' a cultural trait that resists even distribution spread throughout the polity and is hence assumed to hinder the shift from a prenational political system to a 'fully' national one.

⁵ Iceland became a sovereign state under the Danish Crown on 1 December 1918, but 17 June has been chosen as Iceland's National Day, when the entire country celebrates the recurrence (Hálfðanarson 1995).

⁶ The exception remains Zanzibar with a 98% Muslim majority and where indeed a separatist movement has remained dormant since the island's merging with (or 'annexation' to) Tanganyika (1964).

⁷ It is worth noting how Émile Durkheim participated in the vision ascribing homogeneity to specific groups held together by 'mechanical solidarity': 'There is then, a social structure of determined nature to which *mechanical solidarity* corresponds. What characterizes it is a system of segments *homogeneous* and similar to each other. Quite different is the structure of societies where *organic solidarity* is preponderant. They are constituted, not by a repetition of similar, homogeneous segments, but by a system of different organs each of which has a special role, and which are themselves formed of differentiated parts' (Durkheim 1933, 181, my emphasis).

⁸ Benito Mussolini, 'The Incorporation of the Peasantry into the Italian Nation', in Griffin (1995, 41–42).

⁹ Giovanni Papini, 'The war as a source of National Renewal', in Griffin (1995, 23–24).

¹⁰ Roberto Farinacci, 'The War as the Midwife of a New Italian People', in Griffin (1995, 32–34).

¹¹ Benito Mussolini: '*Trenchocracy*', in Griffin (1995).

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