1. Nationalism, Language, Europe

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1.1. Introduction

In a book dealing with aspects of human society it is a good idea to introduce at the outset the major phenomena that will be discussed, and to say something about our understanding of the nature of those phenomena. This book deals with languages, and with the part they play in nationalism. Since the scope of any book has to be limited, we have limited our discussion to Europe.

It is obvious that nationalism is a complex social phenomenon, and that it relates to nations, which are complex social and political structures. We thus clearly have to start by outlining what we mean by nations and by nationalism.

It will be less obvious, however, that the concept of a language is a complex one. Some readers might think that a language is a rather discrete system of communication, that one language can be fairly easily delimited from another. Matters turn out to be much more difficult than this, as we shall see time and time again in the course of the book. This complexity is in fact so great, that even here, in the introductory chapter, we do need to start the discussion of what is meant by a language.

Even the concept of Europe cannot simply be taken for granted, nor can we simply restrict our discussion to Europe without providing some justification for that restriction.

This first chapter is hence devoted to providing a basis for the rest of the book by throwing some light onto the very concepts of nationalism, of distinct languages, and of Europe.

1.2. Nationalism

There can be no question that nationalism is a highly significant factor on the contemporary world scene, but, like most important social and political phenomena, it is actually very difficult to define and to discuss, so much so that we might decide that the effort needed was too great; we might accept that it is important,

and just leave matters there. The contributors to this book are, however, not
to discuss matters here. They are, as linguists, social scientists, and histo-
rians, dedicated to an understanding of human behaviour, both for its own sake,
and in the hope that perhaps better understanding might lead to an ameliora-
tion of some of the world's problems. Since nationalism is such a significant mo-
vation in human behaviour, we feel it commands our attention.

There are, of course, many motivating factors in human behaviour, but we
would claim that nationalism is particularly worthy of study. Why is it particu-
rally significant? Its significance lies in its power to arouse passionate loyalties
and hatreds that motivate acts of extreme violence and courage; people kill
and die for their nation. Of course it is not alone in this: people are driven to similar
extremes to protect their families, their extended families or 'tribes',1 their home
areas with their populations, and their religious groups and the holy places and
symbols of their religions. However, these other loyalties are often rather easier
to understand than nationalism. Parents making supreme sacrifices for their
children can be seen as obeying a universal imperative in life forms, the instinct to
protect one's own genetic material. This instinct can also be seen at work in the
urge to protect one's extended family, but then the extended family, or on a
slightly larger scale the 'tribe', can also be seen, in perhaps the majority of circum-
cumstances in which human beings have existed, as essential for the survival of
the individual and of the nuclear family. The nation is not generally essential to
survival in this way. Of course, if the entire nation were to be wiped out, the individ-
uals and their families would die, but the disappearance of the nation as a
social unit would not in itself pose a threat to individual or family survival; only
if it were to be accompanied by ethnic violence or severe economic collapse would
it be life-threatening, and such cataclysmic events are not an inevitable conse-
quence of the loss of political independence. Conversely, there is no logical
connection between the gaining of political independence by a subject nation and
increased life chances for its citizens. In many, perhaps the vast majority, of
modern nations there is likewise no evidence that in defending the nation one is
defending one's own genetic material; the notion that the citizens of modern
nations are kinsfolk, while the citizens of (potentially) hostile neighbours are
aliens, makes no sense in view of the highly varied genetic make-up of most
modern populations.1

Devotion to one's religious group, like support for one's nation, is much less
obviously to the individual's advantage than is defence of the family, but we would
maintain that it can be more comprehensible than nationalism. It can be seen in
ideological terms as the defence of a world view and its symbols against rival
world views, which are considered to be fundamentally erroneous and which, if
successful, would force the conquered to act in ways abhorrent to their beliefs. It
frequently interacts with support for a 'tribe' or other more primary unit that may
ever be marked off from rival units by religious differences (for example, the history of
Israel and Judaea, reflected in Old Testament accounts, can be interpreted in this
way). While the defence of one's nation has often been seen as the defence of one's
religion, and this seems to have been a widespread perception in Europe between
the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Chapter 2 for the British case), and
while modern hostilities between nations frequently do have a religious dimen-
sion, there are many serious national conflicts that have no clear religious
dimension; the two world wars were fought in Europe with Catholic France,
Protestant Britain, and Orthodox Russia opposing Germany with its mixed
Catholic and Protestant population.2 Thus, while modern nationalisms may be
linked to religion, many cases can be found without any clear religious dimen-
sion. Not only do modern nationalisms often lack a religious element; there is often (to
outsiders) no obvious ideological difference between rival nations. Hence, while
defence of one's religion can be seen as defence of an entire system of beliefs, a
world view, it is difficult in many cases to claim that this is true of the defence of
one's nation. There is in fact a good case for seeing nations as 'imagined com-
nunities', and such would be the view of some commentators (e.g. Hobbes 1651,
and, particularly clearly, Anderson 1991). Such imagined communities could not, of course, exist unless they fulfilled
a need. We can postulate that the need to belong to a community of some kind is a
fundamental human characteristic, and that nations have arisen to fulfill this need, as
earlier more primary communities—local, 'tribal', and 'religious'—have lost
their significance through economic and social change. But why should this need
be fulfilled by nations, rather than some other type of unit? There is strong
support in the literature for a view of nations as products of particular social and
economic conditions operating from around the mid-eighteenth century, as
products of 'modernization' (see particularly A. D. Smith 1981). While the arguments
are persuasive, it must be remembered that the strength of national loy-
alties remains very great at the present, when nations no longer clearly fulfill their
earlier role of fundamental units of economic organization, when the most
important economic decisions are arguably taken by major companies, interna-
tional organizations such as the World Bank or the European Union, and a few
national governments or national institutions such as the governments of the
USA or Japan. What we are seeing here is perhaps the familiar phenomenon of
social and political development lagging behind economic change.

To sum up, contrary to many popular views, nations in the modern sense are a
relatively recent phenomenon. They are particularly important, since they are

1 The term tribe is not one we favour, and will be replaced as the discussion proceeds.
2 It is just to note that all altruism can be reduced to selfish motives, or to motives that
would be a cost-benefit and extremely cynical.

3 In the twentieth century, of course, these states did not arise of themselves in religious terms.
Only sections of the population still maintain a religious affiliation as constitutive of the nation (e.g. sections of the Catholic right in France, Ulster Protestants in the UK). During the Second World War the government of the Soviet Union was militaristically atheistic.
considered in the current dominant political and social order to be those units with which individuals identify most strongly beyond their families; they are, for example, generally the only units in whose defense the exercise of violence is legitimate. 4

We are concerned then in this book with nationalism, which can be seen as a movement to defend the interests of a nation, to defend or secure its political independence (see A. D. Smith 1991: 72).

1.3. Nations and Other Communities

1.3.1. Nations and National Identities

Anthony D. Smith (1991: 14) provides a useful definition of a nation as ‘a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.’ From this definition, which would command widespread agreement among social scientists, we can see that nations, in the modern sense, can only be relatively recent phenomena. Before the advent of printing, a mass public culture is scarcely conceivable. Common legal rights and duties are unenforceable unless relatively rapid travel within the territory is possible, and, while there were political units in the ancient world, such as the Roman Empire, which enjoyed relatively good communications, in most areas and most times before the advent of modern forms of transport, such as railways, the enforcement of common rights and duties in other than very small territories was quite impractical. A nation in the modern sense cannot exist without a shared sense of identity, and for people to share an identity a certain minimum level of communication between them must be guaranteed.

1.3.2. Nations and Nation-states

In the contemporary world there is widespread confusion between the concepts ‘nation’ and ‘nation-state’. Nation-states are relatively easy to define: they are the fundamental units of world political organization. They are often identical to sovereign states; they are the units that have seats in the United Nations (UN); they are usually termed ‘countries’ in English. It would be convenient if we could simply label them ‘states’, but this term is unfortunately used in some nation-states, most notably the USA, to describe units smaller than the nation-state.

It is tempting to equate nation-states and sovereign states, but this might be misleading given the highly fluid nature of sovereignty in the modern world. Virtually all nation-states have surrendered some degree of their sovereignty to international organizations, but nevertheless these organizations—the UN is an excellent example here—derive their authority from the nation-states, not vice versa. In dealings between states there is a complex array of power relationships and agreements. At one extreme, these give wide powers to certain large states, particularly the USA, which has acquired a de facto right to intervene freely and openly in the internal affairs of other states, albeit de jure as an agent of international organizations such as the UN or the Organization of American States. At the other extreme, many small states are clearly under the tutelage of powerful neighbours or international organizations, and have in reality virtually no scope for independent action in many fields. What is generally true of nation-states is, however, that, where they lack de facto independence in certain fields, it has, at least in theory, been voluntarily surrendered to another state or an international organization, although in reality some kind of coercion at some period can be discovered in case after case. 5

Most nation-states describe themselves as ‘nations’, so why can we simply not take them at face value and say that nation-states and nations are identical? This is not possible, since they are abstractions of a different order; a nation-state is a legally defined entity, a nation is a population. While modern populations that consider themselves to be nations generally aspire to acquire a nation-state coextensive with the nation, a definition of the nation that requires it to dominate its own nation-state is too restrictive; most commentators would agree that the major populations of the Union republics of the former Soviet Union, such as Georgians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians, were nations before those republics achieved independence, and that those populations of well-defined regions of states, such as Scotland, that in a majority consider that they have nation status should be recognized as such. Expressed slightly differently, an aspiration to autonomy or independence is sufficient. Although politics bearing a superficial resemblance to modern nation-states are very old, going back millennia in some parts of the world, such as China, India, and the Mediterranean basin, these very old organizations were in origin simply territories that a given elite (for example, Roman patricians or Chinese dynasties with their mandarins) was able to control. Politics of this earlier type developed into or were replaced by modern nation-states, often only slowly, and their traces survived very strongly into modern times: the Austro-Hungarian, Russian, and Ottoman Empires that survived until 1917/1918 were clearly dynastic empires whose populations had no shared sense of common national identity, and the Soviet Union, which in a real sense continued many traditions of the Russian Empire until 1917, was constitutionally a state uniting many nations. Even today it is possible to cite many cases where nation-states and nations do not easily coincide. While the governments

4 It goes without saying that many individuals and groups do not share this dominant perception; for certain groups of religious fundamentalists it may, for example, be perfectly legitimate to exercise violence in the name of the faith.

5 There are some small states, such as Andorra and Sovereign, with some kind of clear de jure dependence on larger neighbors (France and Spain jointly and the United Kingdom respectively in these two instances).
of virtually all nation-states describe their polities as nations, many states contain populations that do not accept the national identity promulgated by the state; in Britain many Scots and Welsh feel they belong to a Scotia or Welsh rather than a British nation, or that they have co-occurring Scottish-British or Welsh-British nationalities. In Arab countries many feel they belong to an Arab nation rather than to a nation defined by one of the many Arab states stretching from Iraq to Morocco and to South Yemen.

For many people an ethnic (non-national) identity is so strong that it renders the (state-oriented) national identity so weak as to be virtually unimportant; we can cite here many members of first American or African ethnic groups ("tribes").

Although nation-states and nations are not identical, they are, of course, closely connected. Anthony Smith (see particularly Smith 1981) divides nations into those that have developed chiefly from ethnic groups that have modified and extended their ethnic identities to encompass larger populations, and those that have developed within particular states where a common sense of national identity has arisen within the state to encompass a previously diverse population.

1.3.3. Nations, Ethnic Groups, and Ethnic Identities

We have seen above that nations frequently develop from ethnic groups (the term ethnic, from Greek, is sometimes used), and that ethnic groups and nations often share names; we can, for example, speak of a Greek ethnic group and a Greek nation. The governments of many nation-states (for example, Germany and many central and east European states) imply a complete coincidence of ethnic group and nation in their policies. Are they then, simply, the same thing? The answer to this has to be negative. The closest difference is territorial: both in earlier times, and in certain areas today, where a nomadic economy prevails, ethnic groups can become scattered across vast territories, interspersed with other groups, and can practice a shifting lifestyle, occupying no clearly defined area. But then also in a very different environment, that of the city, ethnic mixes seem to be typical. Cities typically attract in-migration from a wide area, and unite people of different trades with different backgrounds and skills, all of which favour ethnic mix. These states that implicate identity of ethnic group and nation in their practices can be seen as projecting an anachronistic, rural ideal of ethnic purity onto their mixed urban populations, which nowadays often form a majority. In dynastic pre-national states, the Ottoman Empire being a good example here, the state was not seen as the exclusive territory of a particular ethnic or national group, and there was often a high degree of ethnic tolerance. Also in modern nations that have developed within pre-existing states rather than as an extension of a particular ethnic group, the level of ethnic tolerance may be fairly high, and there may be more clarity in the public mind that ethnic groups and nations are entities of a different order.

In the United States, for example, while there is certainly no absence of ethnic tensions, different ethnic groups of European origin live in considerable harmony. The sort of ethnic cleansing experienced in Nazi Germany or former Yugoslavia in the 1990s being inconceivable, and it is a matter of everyday experience that citizens can be fully American, with an American national identity, whilst being simultaneously Irish-American, Italian-American, and so on, with one of a large number of ethnic identities. The United States was, for example, established by modern European colonisation, and such nation-states of modern colonial origin clearly demonstrate the difference between nations and ethnic groups.

To give another example, Australia is clearly a nation, with a shared identity, but does its majority population of British origin represent an English-Australian, a British Australian, or simply an Australian ethnic group? Or is it part of an ethnic or British ethnic group found in many English-speaking areas? These questions have no easy answers, and we may in fact wish to say that most Australians have complex ethnic identities.

What is an ethnic group? Ethnic groups (or ethnos or ethnic communities) pre-date nations in the modern sense by millennia, a situation confused by the fact that the English word 'nation' and its cognates in other languages are often popularly used to refer to ethnic groups as well as to states and nations. Unlike a nation, an ethnic group need not occupy a territory. Also, unlike a nation, its 'common myths and historical memories' may be much more plausible; since ethnic groups may be much smaller than modern nations, the often quite implausible myths of common descent that nations espouse (and that may have been created or radically adapted by modern propagandists) can have much more credible equivalents in the case of ethnic groups. And, rather than a 'mass, public culture' uniting very disparate elements, there may be a high level of shared cultural norms, and there is usually a shared language. But ethnic groups are uncommonly diverse in size and character. Many are very small and highly culturally coherent, and relatively isolated from other groups, such as the nomadic or tribal peoples who doubtless existed for most of human history, before the development of urban or feudal forms of organization, and that still exist in regions that have not been fully incorporated into the developed world, such as much of Africa, or in enclaves within the developed world such as the home areas of some of those who still identify themselves as native Americans or native Australians. It is ethnic groups of this kind that we have labelled as 'tribes', a term that is perhaps best avoided because of its implications of backwardness, and because it conceals the similarities between such ethnic groups and those of other parts of the world.

Elsewhere ethnic groups may be very large; for example, the majority populations

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1 We return below to the distinction between ethnic and national identity.

2 The idea that rural populations are, or should be, 'ethically pure' is also mistaken. It is perhaps not an out of step with reality in the view of urban ethnic purity.
of many nations show a high degree of cultural coherence and may share a language. In this category we can perhaps include even such large groups as the Han Chinese, numbering hundreds of millions, or the Germans, although in both these groups, particularly the former, there is a shared language only clearly in a written form. Between these very large groups and the very small ones just mentioned there are thousands of ethnic groups of intermediate size, some constituting the majority populations of nations (and in these cases very often being regarded as nations by themselves and others), many others constituting the most varied range of majority and minority groups in modern states. Many ethnic groups live in more than one nation-state.

Given that the status of a nation confers a particular kind of legitimacy, and given that it can lead to political independence with concomitant power for the group concerned, there is strong pressure on ethnic groups to redefine themselves as nations. This can lead to severe problems—for example, in Northern Ireland or Bosnia, where two or more ethnic groups with differing national aspirations live together in a single quite small territory.

This redefinition of ethnic groups as nations shows the very close link between the two categories. Indeed it is often pointless to argue whether particular populations are ethnic groups or nations, but nevertheless the distinction is useful: ethnic groups can be much smaller than nations, can lack a territorial dimension, and are usually much more focused linguistically and culturally. Many modern nations, such as the USA, and to a lesser extent some western European nations such as the Netherlands and Britain, are able to encompass various ethnic groups in relative harmony (though it would be naive to pretend there were no tensions), and many citizens of such states have both an overarching and diffuse national identity, and a more focused and specific ethnic identity.

The high degree of cultural coherence found in an ethnic group often includes a shared religion, sometimes a distinctive religion not found in neighboring groups, sometimes an exclusive religion not found elsewhere at all. Distinctive religions arguably define the Irish ethnic group and the Slav Muslim ethnic group (in the former Yugoslavia, mainly in Bosnia), and it is possible (though not uncontroversial) to regard Jews and Sikhs as ethnic groups defined by exclusive religions. Since other religious groups may encompass many ethnic groups, even many nations (Islam and Christianity, and the major Christian denominations such as Catholics are good examples here), it is possible to see religious groups, on the one hand, and ethnic groups and nations, on the other, as categories of different orders. A tension between a religious and an ethnic view of the group can be seen within Judaism: some members see the group as primarily religious, others see it as ethnic. Given what I have said about ethnic groups reclaiming themselves as nations, it is not surprising to find religious groups (or ethnic-religious groups) seeking national status. Within Judaism this represents the political programme of Zionism (thoroughly understandable in the context of persecution of Jews in Europe by a number of other ethnic groups seeking exclusive occupation of territories), which, once it had come to see the Jews as a nation, set about (re)acquiring a national territory in Israel, with all the attendant problems of relations with the other groups occupying that territory.

In modern states countless individuals have complex multiple identities, encompassing occupational, class, regional, local, gender, political, and economic factors, as well as the religious, ethnic, and national factors that have concerned us here. However, in the perception of many individuals, and often in state-sponsored ideologies, ethnic and national (and sometimes religious) factors have a particular importance. This book will concentrate on such factors, but it must not be forgotten that for many people for much of the time other factors play a far greater role in their own sense of identity.

1.5.4. Nations, Ethnic Groups, and Language

As we have seen, the cultural coherence of an ethnic group is often partly expressed by language. This works in two ways: a distinctive language may help to demarcate the ethnic group from other groups, and a common language may facilitate communication and hence coherence within an ethnic group. Language can hence be extremely important for ethnic identity. The same applies to national identity and to nationalism, and it is the significance of language for nationalism and national identity that forms the topic of this book. We now turn to considerations of a more linguistic nature.

1.4. Language

Language is, of course, the general term for human vocal (and also written and signed) communication, but we are here concerned with the use of the term to designate distinct forms of communication used by distinct human groups. Since languages (in this sense) can differ appreciably from each other, they can form highly effective markers of different cultures and different ethnic groups and nations. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that ethnic groups and nations often use distinct languages in a highly conscious and effective fashion as markers of their distinct identities. A superficial glance at modern Europe could lead one to make two assumptions: that different languages were universally markers of different ethnic groups and nations, and that they were the most salient of such markers. These assumptions arise from the fact that a high proportion of European ethnic groups and nations bear names that resemble strongly, or are virtually identical to, the names of their languages; and that in many cases distinct languages are by far the clearest feature distinguishing one nation or ethnic group from its neighbours.

If matters were that simple this would be a very short, or very trivial (and boring) book, but of course matters are in reality much more complex. The complexity begins when we attempt to define what is meant by 'a language' and how it differs from 'a dialect.'
1.4.1. Language, Dialect, and Language Family

Human beings are the most mobile of the larger land mammals, and, even if only moving on foot, a single human group can spread out within a few years into an area of hundreds of square miles. Under these circumstances languages, like other human cultural characteristics, become diverse; given the fact that languages change constantly, small and then large differences can develop between different groups of language-users, and these differences can then be used to mark regional and social distinctions. Unlike other cultural characteristics, however, languages fulfill the role of essential media of communication and hence cannot become too diverse if communication is to be maintained. However, until recent times, communication took place for most people almost entirely within a local or family group. This meant that, if an original single group became divided through migration, there was little to prevent an original fairly uniform language diverging so much that communication between the two new groups became difficult or even impossible. We can thus see how different languages can arise, and how they can become markers of different ethnic groups and different nations.

At this point we will introduce two entirely plausible and relatively working assumptions. The first is that different ethnic groups and different nations are distinguished from each other by different languages that are mutually unintelligible. The second is that language differences that arise because of geographical and social barriers within a nation or an ethnic group produce not different languages but merely different dialects, which are mutually intelligible. There are cases where these two assumptions hold. For example, the Hungarian, Romanian, and Basque languages are markers of Hungarian, Romanian, and Basque ethnic groups respectively, and they are not intelligible to any appreciable extent to speakers of neighboring languages. Within each of these languages there are different dialects in different regional groups that are mutually intelligible, though not perfectly so. These cases provide a good starting point for unravelling the complexities of the dialect-language question, but unfortunately they represent cases that are much simpler than many. In fact while dialects of the same language do tend to resemble each other more than do different languages, the reality of dialect-language differentiation is often highly complex. First of all we do find varieties that are described as dialects of a single language, but where mutual comprehensibility is very low. There is, for example, low comprehensibility between many German dialects (see Chapter 7). The reverse case is more common; there is, for example, usually a high level of mutual comprehensibility between spoken Norwegian and spoken Swedish, and between written Norwegian (Bokmål) and written Danish, despite the fact that all three are considered separate languages (the full complexities of the Scandinavian situation are discussed in Chapter 5). There can also be a high level of mutual comprehensibility between neighboring Slavic languages—for example, between Czech, Slovak, Polish, Ukrainian, Belorusian, and Russian, and between Slovene, Serbo-Croatian, Macedonian, and Bulgarian, although between languages of the extremes of these continua—for example, between Czech and Russian or between Slavonic and Bulgarian—communication is not readily possible. There are even cases where speakers of certain dialects of a language may find it easier to understand dialects of a neighboring language than to understand remote dialects of their own language; thus speakers of north-western (Low) German dialects certainly understand more of north-eastern Dutch dialects than they do of the southern German dialects of Germany, Austria, or Switzerland (see Chapter 7).

A number of interesting points emerge from this complex state of affairs. First of all, it is clear that, if varieties are labelled separate languages, the notion that they are therefore necessarily absolutely different from each other and not at all mutually comprehensible is quite mistaken. There are indeed languages that are quite incomprehensible to speakers of all other languages—Basque, Hungarian, and Japanese are examples—but most languages show clear resemblances to others. Resemblances between languages may be rather obscure and only detectable by specialists. Examples are the similarities used by historical linguists to establish the various language families of the world, the best known being Indo-European, which includes most of the languages of Europe, Iran, and the northern part of the Indian subcontinent. Such similarities tell us that English is related to Hindi, and incidentally that Hungarian is related to Finnish, and Japanese to Turkish (possibly, though this latter relationship is controversial) within two other language families labelled Uralic and Altaic respectively. Often, however, the resemblances are very clear, and here we are dealing with subgroups within language families, or with small relatively undifferentiated language families. Examples of subgroups are Slavonic (German, Dutch, English, and Scandinavian), and Romance (Spanish, Portuguese, and others) within Indo-European, and Finnic (Finnish, Estonian, and others) within Uralic.

Within such subgroups or small families intelligibility between different languages may be high, as we have seen, although in some cases it may be low, as

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10 It is entirely possible, though unproven, that some sapiens sapiens originated in a single area with a single language, but that in the 100,000 years or so that have elapsed since that time the hundreds of different languages that we know today could have arisen.

11 For the moment we are using the term 'dialect' to include standard varieties or standard languages (see below).
between English and German, or between Scandinavian languages and other Germanic languages. Why then are certain mutually quite comprehensible varieties labelled separate languages, while others have the status of dialects of a single language? And why are certain mutually poorly comprehensible varieties also labelled as dialects of a single language? There is a copious literature on this topic (see e.g. Hugon 1978; Fishman 1989), which seeks the answers to these questions very much in ethnic and national identities, to which we now therefore return.

1.4.2. Language, Ethnic and National Identity, and Nationalism

If speakers of related but poorly mutually comprehensible varieties consider that they share an ethnic or national identity, they may accept that their varieties constitute dialects of a single language. This seems to be true for most of those who speak the diverse range of dialects that we label 'German', though some, notably Swiss-Germans, do not accept this common ethnic identity. Where the speech of such a group nevertheless contains dialects presenting severe comprehension problems to others, there may be an ambivalent attitude to the unity of the language; in the German case Low German dialects may often be considered a distinct language, but one that is still in some sense 'German', not a 'foreign' language (see Chapter 7).

Conversely, speakers of related and mutually comprehensible dialects may consider that they speak separate languages if they belong to separate ethnic groups. This sense of ethnic difference in the face of linguistic similarity may arise from a whole host of causes: Czech and Slovak ethnic groups, speaking very similar varieties, have considerably different historical experiences (see Chapter 9), while Poles and Russians belong traditionally to different Christian denominations, as well as having different histories. Croats and Serbs are similarly separated by religion, and see themselves as ethnically different; their dialects, having been considered by some to be a single language for around a century, were redefined in the 1990s as two languages, separated on ethnic lines (see Chapter 19).

We hence find that, white clear linguistic differences can delimit ethnic groups, the boundaries of languages are, in their turn, often determined ethnicity. The boundary of a language often becomes particularly clear if an ethnic group comes to see itself as a nation. A nation may make a collective, conscious effort to raise its dialect, or group of dialects, to the status of a language, and may take deliberate, conscious steps to differentiate it from related varieties, as happened very clearly in the case of Norwegian in the nineteenth century (see Chapter 9). Even more radically, an ethnic group delimited on a mainly non-linguistic basis may even revive a little-spoken language to reinforce its sense of national identity; the attempt to revivify, and the revival of, Irish, and the revival of Hebrew are examples. Particularly if the nation achieves its own nation-state, its language may become the subject of large-scale language planning. As in the Norwegian case, it may be manipulated to give greater currency to grammatical forms that are not found in the rival languages (the reintroduction of certain gender distinctions found in some

Norwegian varieties but not in Danish or Swedish), but much more commonly words of obvious foreign origin may be purged. Such language-planning is clearly impossible without some sort of administrative apparatus, and is hence easiest at national-state level, but it represents only part of a process of standardization. Standardization with little language-planning has occurred in some very well-established nation-states, such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and indeed in these two states relatively little importance is accorded to the majority language in the national identity. Standardization involves the selection of one of the dialects, or of a high-status literary variety, as the most prestigious spoken medium, termed 'standard language'. Its selection usually succeeds the establishment of a written standard, but not necessarily; selection of written and spoken standards may proceed hand in hand. Whatever the sequence of events, the written standard is usually closer to the spoken standard than it is to other spoken varieties. There is a wide variation between language areas in the extent to which other varieties are stigmatized. In some areas, such as England and France, non-standard dialects may enjoy very much lower prestige, in others, such as Austria and Germany, and Austria, we find non-standard dialects of relatively high status. In some areas, such as Norway and German-speaking Switzerland, standard and non-standard coexist in a kind of equilibrium, known as diglossia, and non-standard forms have relatively high status. It is clear that this kind of standardization process demands fairly sophisticated administration, and is hence characteristic of modern conditions, of nation-states bound together by modern communications.

We can hence see standard languages partly as products of modern nations, and nations partly as products of modern communications that allow the effective functioning of states. While certain languages, particularly those like Basque or Hungarian, that are very clearly different from their neighbours, were doubtless easy to conceptualize in earlier times, it is arguable that many languages, such as the Scandinavian or Slavonic languages, were probably very vague entities when they were simply a group of dialects within a fluid, much larger dialect continuum, with a literary language that may have been scarcely used. A codified standard language, however, clearly differentiated from others, gives the language itself a kind of focus and identity that may have not possessed before. We can hence see that the growth of nations and the sharp demarcation of languages are actually related processes.

Given that the clear conception of a particular language arises in many areas only along with the development of nations, we can see that the basis of nations are highly varied: territorial and regional, religious, as well as linguistic and administrative. They are, of course, also often based on pre-existing states and on
monolingual nature was seen as essential to this, a quite plausible assumption since a shared first language can facilitate greater economic and political cooperation between citizens. In other parts of the continent multilingual states were seen by emergent ethnic and national elites as barriers to progress, their multilingual nature being viewed as an essential part of the problem. There hence emerged nationalist movements, dedicated to securing nation-states for ethnic and national groups, that were often defined as the speakers of a particular language. Such states were often constructed from parts of multi-ethnic multilingual polities, as we have seen (Greece and Albania were, for example, parts of the Ottoman Empire), or united a number of pre-existing states (for example, Italy and Germany). Particularly in the German case, an entire philosophy was developed by thinkers such as Herder and Fichte that saw language as the essential defining characteristic of a nation (see Chapter 7). As well as having native roots, this way of thinking was heavily influenced by the French case, where the common language was promoted by the revolutionary state as a means of achieving democracy and equality (see Chapter 3). Many eastern and central European nations were united by other factors beyond language, most notably by a loyalty to a particular religion, and to a historic homeland, very clear in the Greek case, for instance, even though these almost mythical homelands were often inhabited in modern times by numerous members of other ethnic groups or nations (see Chapter 11 for the strikingly multi-ethnic nature of modern Greece). In the German case the homeland was vast in comparison to most others, and ill-defined, and the nation was also sharply divided on religious lines, so a particular importance was accorded to the language as a unifying factor. Given the size of the German-speaking area, and the high prestige of its scholarship in many fields from around 1860, particularly in (historical) linguistics, the German view of language as absolutely crucial to nationalism became extremely influential, and even helped to introduce a linguistic element into national movements, Irish nationalism being a good case, which had previously placed little stress on such questions (see Chapter 12). Other factors favoured the paramount place accorded to language in nationalism in Europe, the dominance in movements of intellectuals of relatively low social status, and the decline of religion through general secularising trends (see particularly Hobbes 1651). In much of Europe, traditional elites who, if highly educated, would have been schooled in Latin and Greek, or in French, contrasted with a new intelligentsia who were versed in the local language. A new generation of schoolmasters were able to educate the population in the local language, and often creating a bond with that population through their common use of such a language, who nevertheless saw their desire for political emancipation blocked by an aristocracy either from another linguistic group, as in the Ottoman case, or using a foreign language in its royal courts, as exemplified by the French-using German nobility and princes.

We can see, then, how a whole variety of factors have given language a crucial place in nationalism in most parts of Europe. However, the position is com-

14 In the French case well under 50% spoke something that was labelled “French/Patois” in the mid-eighteenth century, but a considerable majority spoke Romance dialects related to French, and were therefore relatively rapidly able, in the centre and north of the area to consider themselves as French-speakers, and to learn the language, when pressure was applied upon them to do so, in a similar way, and at a slightly earlier date, speakers of Scots in Britain were able to reconstitute themselves as English-speakers (see Chapters 2 and 3). In contrast, another western state, Spain, was not able to convince speakers of some of its minority Romance dialects related to Spanish that their speech was Spanish (Castilian), and Catalan, for example, still retains the very clear status of a separate minority language (see Chapter 6).
nously varied, dependent on the extremely diverse histories of the various regions of the continent. This book is dedicated to exploring this fascinating diversity, both for its intrinsic interest, but also because nationalism, and in particular linguistic nationalism, is a political force of great importance not only in Europe, but in many parts of the world.

1.5. Europe

The book is restricted in its scope to Europe partly, and simply, because every book has to be limited in some way. However, we also impose this limit because Europe is, as we have seen, the area that has seen the clearest development of a large number of nationalisms in which the linguistic element is of very high importance. This is not to say that the phenomenon is not found elsewhere; it certainly is—in Japan, for example. It would also be a mistake to maintain that all European nationalisms have a clear linguistic basis; some, like Dutch nationalism or Scottish nationalism, do not (or, in the latter case, did not until recently). It is in fact the diverse role played by language in nationalism that forms much of our subject matter.

In our discussions we make two significant omissions, one region, and one category of linguistic minority.

The region we omit is the Caucasus (the modern states of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, and the autonomous republics of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Karachai-Cherkessia within the Russian Federation). The omission is justified by the conventional status of the Caucasus as Europe's border, and by the extraordinary linguistic diversity of the region (approximately forty languages, the number depending, as always in this matter, on what distinguishing criteria are used), which is quite atypical of Europe, and which is partly a reflection of the fact that European styles of state administration (nation-states or even relatively unified feudal states) have been imposed on much of the region only in the course of the last two centuries.¹⁵

The other significant omission is the ethnic identities and languages of minorities in modern European states who do not occupy a definable territory within those states, such as immigrant minorities. This omission in no way implies that such groups are unimportant or uninteresting; it is simply that, in not occupying or claiming territories within the European states where they live, they are unlike nations (although, of course, they often see themselves as belonging to nations elsewhere, or as having complex or multiple nationalities). We take seriously the view of the nation as an 'imagined community' (but see Chapter 13), and one of the imaginary elements in its vision is often that of ethnic parity (see above). In the urban centres where European populations are increasingly concentrated it can be pure illusion: cities were perhaps never mono-ethnic in Europe; they certainly are not today. Immigrant groups will therefore be treated, where appropriate, in their role as the 'other' in nationalism, but their own attitudes can usually not be explored in detail.

Nationalism is an ideology; the unrealistic mono-ethnic vision may be part of this ideology. The complex concept of the 'national language' is another of its components. We now turn in the following chapters to an account of the fascinatingly diverse part played by language in European nationalisms.

¹⁵ We also omit the small Mediterranean states of Malta and Gibraltar, both are linguistically quite unlike the neighbouring major European states, Italy and Spain, and so would not usually be included in discussions of these states. Malta is a former British colony, and Gibraltar still is under British sovereignty, and the pattern of language use in both, with a prominent role for English, resembles that in non-European areas currently or formerly under European rule, and is arguably rather exceptional of Europe.