

**Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism** edited by Daniele Conversi. London: Routledge, 2002. Pp.302. £70.00 (hardback); £19.99 (paperback). ISBN 0-415-26373-5 and 33273-7.

The proliferation of nationalist disputes contributed in no small way to the bloody character of the last century. But the clarity of social science thinking about nationalism remained blurred for at least a century into the age of nationalism. This was in no small measure due to the domination of the social sciences in the West by academics from Britain and the United States who dismissed ethnic politics because it appeared to pose no threat to their own well-ordered societies. On the other hand, Marxists both in the West and in the Soviet Union and its satellites insisted the class struggle and proletarian internationalism had a more powerful hold over people's emotions than state-building efforts driven by the national principle.

Walker Connor may not have developed his own explanatory model for the origins and enduring appeal of nationalist ideas and emotions but, in no small way, he has rescued the subject from terminological confusion and attempted to place it on a secure methodological foundation.

This *Festschrift* is, accordingly, a fitting tribute from scholars influenced, to differing degrees, by Connor's work. The editor, Daniele Conversi, a theorist of nationalism who has produced distinctive work on its importance in Spain and the former Yugoslavia, provides a stimulating opening chapter in which he recalls Connor's academic achievement.

The tendency of both society and political practitioners to conflate nation and state elicited wilting assaults from Connor in articles that first appeared in the 1970s. He showed that nation-building was more often a disguise for state-building and that nation-destroying among minority groups was often part of the ideological agenda. Connor defined the nation as a self-differentiating ethnic group and he further believed that ethnicity was so bound up with nationalism to justify using the term *ethnonationalism* to describe such a phenomenon. He argued that the nation was a phenomenon with mass appeal that emerged in late modernity with the establishment of compulsory education and conscript armies. He parts company with Ernest Gellner, who saw industrialization as a catalyst for nation-formation, which has given rise in turn to energetic debate (Conversi arguing that industrialization was perhaps the seminal factor behind the rise of anti-state nationalism in Spain).

Connor refuted the work of highly influential post-1945 scholars such as Gabriel Almond and Karl Deutsch that the increasing contact occasioned by modernization in the spheres of transport, education, consumerism, tourism and so on would break down ethnic particularisms and lead to the gradual onset of uniform societies. Such a transformation appeared to be at the heart

of the Soviet experiment and Connor was an isolated voice in the 1970s when he argued that Marxism–Leninism had failed to solve the national question and that national sentiment was being reproduced at the societal level in many different corners of the Marxist world. He also argued that the appeal of ethnonationalism was not confined to a particular class or dependent on a specific set of economic variables, and drew on the psychology of collective identity and homelands to account for the emotion and passions often to be found in the expression of nationalist sentiment.

Chapters by Anthony Smith, Daniel Horowitz and Joshua Fishman deal with the non-rational features of nationalism which Connor has been criticized for popularizing. Smith comes to his defence but disputes his assertion that nationalism was largely absent from the world before late modernity.

Connor's perspectives are fruitfully applied by Brendan O'Leary, who builds on his work on how federations were deployed as a system of control in Marxist states and goes on to argue that the same might be the case in liberal democracies, drawing on Britain and the EU for his examples. John Coakley extends Connor's argument that ethnic strife cannot be predicated on tangible elements, religion being chief among them. He argues that in twentieth-century Europe most ethnic conflicts did not have a significant religious composition. He suggests that in societies like Bosnia and Northern Ireland, where religion was all too often advanced as a primary cause of conflict, its role was little more than that of maintaining an ethnonationalist boundary.

In a stimulating conclusion, Conversi reviews the state of the area study of nationalism, anticipating some underlying trends. He warns in particular about essentialism, as well as historical and cultural determinism, where there is a tendency to describe conflicts as historically pre-ordained and based on widespread feelings uniting an ethnic group, or perhaps gripping a 'civilization'. In other works, Conversi has shown how such shallow viewpoints, when held by policy makers, can lead to disaster, as in former Yugoslavia where the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization stood aside for four years because they believed 'ancient ethnic hatreds' needed to be allowed to work themselves out. Possible new directions for research are suggested, when Conversi calls for the need for greater rigour in the field of globalization studies in order to test the validity of Connor's original hypothesis that 'international contacts are bound to create more clashes than encounters or further separation rather than fusion'.

In sum, this is a stimulating collection on the contemporary relevance of nationalism that is bound to appeal to students grappling with a still elusive and evolving concept.

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