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Elites and popular nationalism*

ABSTRACT

Much current theory concerning nationalism holds that elites commonly create or cause popular nationalism. In part, that thesis may be due to an overwhelming emphasis in research on nationalism on positive cases: cases where nationalism has appeared, ignoring cases where it has not. In this article, I challenge the thesis by showing numerous historical cases in which elites have promoted nationalisms that ordinary people have not adopted, or in which ordinary people have adopted a nationalism before it was taken up by elites. Even if elites do not create popular nationalism, however, they can and do shape its *expression* in a variety of ways, such as organizing it, providing relevant information, or providing opportunity or incentive for it. I show this through historical examples.

KEYWORDS: Nationalism; elites; ethnic identity; ethnic violence; regionalism

My purpose in this study is to contest the thesis, widespread in late twentieth century literature on nationalism, that elites commonly *create* popular nationalism. Others, notably Anthony Smith (e.g., 1998; 2000), also have argued against that thesis. However, my argument is new in its method. For the most part, I do not take instances of evident nationalism and argue that elites are not responsible, or not wholly responsible for that nationalism. Rather, I demonstrate the weakness of the thesis by pointing out negative cases, cases in which elites have tried to create nationalism but have failed. This is not to say that elites are impotent. Elites do *affect expressions* of popular nationalism, and do *take advantage* of popular nationalism and *use* it to their own ends, as I discuss subsequently.

I should point out what I do not attempt to do in this study. I refer to numerous cases of both nationalism and failed or missing nationalism, but I do not try to explain them. I simply use them as evidence concerning the question of whether elites are sufficient or necessary to create popular nationalism. To explain them is beyond the scope of this paper and is not needed for my purposes. This also means I make little or no reference to many factors that are relevant and important for explaining particular cases of nationalism, such as social class, gender, and religion.

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Let me begin with key definitions. By elites, I mean people with attributes that lead them to be ranked higher and accorded more prestige and respect than ordinary people. These attributes include being politically or administratively powerful, being rich or propertied, having a title or high official rank, being well-educated, being a star, and so forth.[1] Frequently it is useful to classify or narrow down our specification of elites, for example speaking of political elites, economic or business elites, religious elites, and intellectual elites, or, along a different dimension, state, regional, and local elites.

Nationalism typically is taken to mean support for political action in favour of one's own set of people, whatever that may be, where usually the political action in question is attainment of autonomy or independence, or prevailing over other states. That definition will do for my purposes here. Note that 'one's own set of people' typically is defined by membership criteria such as living or being born in a certain territory, or possessing certain ethnic characteristics such as language or appearance (as in 'race'), and religion.

When non-elite members of a set of people exhibit nationalism, I call it *popular* nationalism. I define popular nationalism, then, in contrast to *elite* nationalism. In the historical development of nationalisms, nationalism among elites – such as aristocrats, gentry, merchants, or intellectuals – typically appears before popular nationalism does. There has been and still is considerable debate over the modernity of nationalism, and the extent to which there were nations and nationalisms in premodern times, that is, before 1800 (see A. D. Smith 1998 for an overview). Nevertheless, virtually all scholars of nationalism agree that popular nationalism has become a much more widespread and important factor in the world since 1800 than it was previously. It may be noted that where some intellectuals are nationalistic before ordinary people, they often affect or create many of the objects of subsequent popular nationalism – the language dialect spoken, historical myths, and so forth. This is far from saying they create the popular nationalism itself. I discuss these points more fully later.

Clearly, the term 'popular nationalism' obscures many differences among non-elites, such as by class, occupation, gender, religion, and so forth. It has been used in the literature, and I use it here, because 'non-elites' is the simplest contrasting category for 'elites,' and because of the historical importance of the rise of popular (non-elite) nationalism. Differences among non-elites are frequently important in explanation of popular nationalism. Popular nationalism may appear first or only among certain sub-populations. For example, Catalan nationalism was strong in the Catalonian middle class before World War I, but in the working class only after the war (Conversi 1997; Díez Medrano 1995). Under some circumstances, elites may try to rouse nationalism only among particular sub-populations. For example, Iranian and Iraqi leaders made appeals to Shi'ite and Sunni members, respectively, of their foe's population during their war during the 1980s – appeals that failed completely (Lewis 1998).

Nevertheless, to examine the degree to which elites are necessary and sufficient to create popular nationalism, for the most part we can ignore such differences. If elites frequently fail to create popular nationalism, for whatever reason, then elites clearly are not sufficient. If popular nationalism appears without being elite-led, again for whatever reason, then elites clearly are not necessary.

I do not specify what the proportion of a population characterized by nationalism needs to be in order to say that popular nationalism exists (and neither do other scholars, although use of the term is widespread). Moreover, it is difficult to measure the proportion of a population that is nationalistic, although electoral behaviour can provide some indication. The extent of apparent nationalism also will depend on the nationalistic behaviour observed. Flying the flag, voting in favour of a nationalistic candidate (who otherwise may take positions contrary to one's interests), supporting nationalistic violence, and taking part in such violence all entail different costs and benefits to individuals. We would expect the proportions of a given population pursuing such actions to vary according to the action. Hence, I simply will say that popular nationalism exists if a non-trivial proportion, that is, a politically significant proportion of non-elites exhibits nationalism.

CLAIMS THAT 'ELITES CREATE NATIONALISM'

An extreme example of the perspective I am critiquing is Kedourie (1993), who from his opening sentence makes clear his view that intellectuals create nationalism (Gellner 1993). Greenfeld (1992) too holds that intellectuals historically played a 'central role' in creating nationalism. More generally, Greenfeld credits 'social, political, and cultural' elites, specifically the aristocracy in England, France, and Russia, and 'middle class intellectuals' in Germany (Greenfeld 1992: 22).

Some scholars hold more nuanced or ambiguous views of the importance of elites. Snyder (2000) seems at times to claim that elites create popular nationalism. For example, concerning the cases he will examine he writes, 'Elite persuasion is the central mechanism promoting popular nationalism in most of these cases' (op. cit.: 89). Analysing Serbia, he states, 'As in Western Europe, the state created nationalism, not the reverse' (op. cit.: 169). However, his argument, such as his classification of types of nationalism and identification of factors leading to each, in fact focuses on nationalistic *violence*. The bulk of his analysis presents and supports the claim that elites determine the form and expression of nationalism, specifically, whether or not the type of nationalism that emerges is prone to violence. Thus, introducing a long chapter on 'Nationalism amid the Ruins of Communism,' he writes, 'I begin by briefly considering some leading explanations for post-Communist nationalist violence and then sketch my own explanation based on democratization and elite persuasion' (op. cit.: 190).

In this study, I am not concerned with rebutting the claim that elites play a crucial role in the rise of nationalistic *violence* or in determining the expression of nationalism more generally. In fact, as I discuss at the end, I consider such claims far more justified than the claim that elites play a crucial role in the rise of nationalism per se. For example, actual nationalistic conflict requires mobilization, which becomes more likely when promoted and organized by elites and less likely when suppressed by elites (Kaufman 2001; Snyder 2000). Hence, while I contest some of Snyder's (2000) claims about causes of nationalism, in fact my argument is compatible with the bulk of his analysis.

Brubaker (1996) does not insist on elite creation of nationalism in all circumstances. For example, he states explicitly that elite manipulation is insufficient to account for the nationalistic behaviour of Serbs in the Krajina region of Croatia in the early 1990s (Brubaker 1996: 72). However, Brubaker's strong emphasis on the point that nations are constructed leads in other situations to the claim that they and corresponding nationalisms are elite creations. For example, he claims that nationalisms in the Soviet Union and its successor states are a result of policies by state elites of the Soviet Union, albeit unintentional. Smith (2000) similarly critiques Brubaker for giving undue importance to state elites.

Most analyses of nationalism from a rational choice perspective – that is, that essentially consider individuals to be pursuing their interests – tend not to ascribe creation of nationalism to elites (e.g., Díez Medrano 1995). Exceptions tend to be analyses that take rational choice view more of elites than of ordinary people. For example, Rogowski (1985) conceptualizes elites as pursuing their interests, but under many circumstances sees them as 'leading' non-elites into nationalism. Brass (1991) similarly sees elites manipulating symbols of ethnicity to create and shape ethnic identity and nationalism in accordance with the elites' interests.

Finally, even Anderson's (1983) *imagined communities* account of nationalism implies some elite creation of nationalism. For one thing, he sees the spread of nationalism throughout the world as the influence of what might be considered elite, i.e., European, countries (see also Kedourie 1993; Davidson 1992; Greenfeld 1992). For another, communications media are key to the initial and subsequent rises of nationalism. Since elites of some sort – government, intellectual, or business – typically control the content of such media, this implies they indeed create nationalism. Occasionally, Anderson states this explicitly, as when discussing creole communities of South America: 'Neither economic interest, Liberalism, nor Enlightenment could, or did create *in themselves* the *kind*, or shape, of imagined community to be defended from [imperial and *anciens*] regimes' depredations. . . . In accomplishing *this* specific task, pilgrim creole functionaries and provincial creole printmen played the decisive historical role' (Anderson 1983: 65).

The role of elites is unclear in the perspective that argues that ethnicity is an extension of kinship, and nationalism is thus an extension of kin

favouritism (e.g., van den Berghe 1981; Shaw and Wong 1989). Neither van den Berghe (1981) nor Shaw and Wong (1989) explicitly credit elites with creating nationalism. However, since this explanation holds essentially that people have a false belief – that people are kin who are not – on which they act, it would seem that elites could have a strong hand in creating nationalism by promoting such a false belief. Johnson (1986), for example, makes this claim explicitly (see also Goetze 2001).

For the most part, the counter-thesis for which I argue – that elites do *not* create nationalism – is compatible with analyses that take some version of a rational choice view of individuals. That is, scholars such as Gellner (1983; 1997) and Breuilly (1993) assume for the most part that individuals are pursuing their interests. Gellner sees popular nationalism as an interest-serving response to conditions of modernity, that is, the industrial period. Nationalist elites articulate justifications for popular nationalism and provide leadership for its political expression, but do not create it.

Breuilly (1993) is similar in that he emphasizes nationalism as politics, that is, as a means of pursuing interests. Breuilly does allot some importance influence to elites, for example in seeing state-controlled primary education and mass media as somewhat successful means of creating nationalism among the working class. However, he is skeptical about the view that 'nationalism in some special way is the politics of the intellectuals' (Breuilly 1993: 49). Levi and Hechter (1985) and Hechter (1995), whose analyses are more formally rational choice, explicitly try to account for nationalistic behaviour without resorting to emotions and socialized values. Thus elites do not create nationalism in ordinary people, who are nationalist for rational reasons.

The counter-thesis also is consistent with the Deutsch's (1966) explanation of nationalism as resulting from a certain level of communication and certain types of communication in a given territory (see also Katzenstein 1976). Finally, it also follows from Whitmeyer's (1997a) modification of the view that ethnicity is extended kinship. Namely, Whitmeyer suggests that people will support their minimal endogamous set (MES), the marriage pool into which they expect their descendants to marry. Both the communication explanation and the MES explanation see nationalism as rising from expansion, typically associated with industrialization, of their respective sets of people, those linked by communication and those forming the MES.

As mentioned above, my approach here is to question the thesis that elites create popular nationalism by presenting a large number of negative cases, cases in which some elites advocate a nationalism that fails to become popular. The empirical focus of studies of nationalism is overwhelmingly on positive cases, that is, situations in which some sort of nationalism has appeared. Even those who explicitly question the thesis that popular nationalism is the creation of elites, such as Smith (1998, 2000) and Breuilly (1993), tend to use only positive cases to argue this point. For example, Breuilly notes, 'There are a large number of nationalist movements in

which intellectual leadership is not particularly marked' (Breuilly 1993: 50). However, those who restrict analysis to positive cases can make a strong case only for the claim that elites are not *necessary* for the appearance of nationalism. Here I argue for the additional claim that elites are not *sufficient*. To examine this argument, we must look at negative cases.

However, before considering negative cases it is useful to consider more extensively claims made in support of the thesis that elites create popular nationalism, as stimulated by comparison of positive cases.

HOW ELITES MIGHT CREATE POPULAR NATIONALISM

The thesis that elites create popular nationalism, or at least can do so, typically is accompanied by the conception that individuals adopt nationalism due to the influence of ideas. Thus Brubaker (1996) claims that because the Soviet state classified people according to nationality, people came to think of themselves as having that nationality, which thus led to nationalism. Scholars often claim that non-European places got the idea of nationalism from Europe, as Davidson (1992) claims for Africa.

This conception that individuals adopt nationalism due to the influence of ideas fits with the thesis that elites create popular nationalism, since while elites certainly do not have a monopoly on the creation of ideas, they are more able to promulgate them than ordinary people. Those who claim elites create popular nationalism typically concentrate either on a cultural transfer of nationalistic ideas or on political organization around nationalistic ideas as the mechanism. I consider each in turn, although these types of mechanisms may overlap or work in combination.

On the cultural side, many students of nationalism claim that elites lead ordinary people to nationalism through producing ideas concerning the nation (e.g., Anderson 1983; Greenfeld 1992; Kedourie 1993). In the overwhelming majority of countries, or future countries, or would-be countries, elites – especially, urban intellectuals – are nationalistic well before the rest of the territory's population (Hobsbawm 1990; Schulze 1996). This was true in Eastern Europe (Hroch 1985), in Western Europe (Dann 1993; Weber 1976), in Russia and territories of the Soviet Union (Hosking 1997, 2001; Kaiser 1994), of Kurds and Turks in the territory of modern Turkey (Behrendt 1993), in Japan (Craig 1961; Linhart 1994), and in other places. Often, these nationalistic elites are propagandists for their nationalism.

Urban intellectuals may found groups devoted to the celebration and promotion of nationalism. They may codify a national language where before there had been only vernacular dialects. Often, the populace of the potential 'nation' speaks several dialects. In fact, a common feature of preindustrial society is that language varies gradually over territory, such that virtually every village speaks somewhat differently from even its close neighbours. The vernacular of the ruling elite may be completely different from that of the common people. So the intellectuals establish a standard

language, often through just one intellectual writing a grammar or dictionary, such as Vuk Karadzic who did this for the Stokavian dialect of Serbo-Croatian (Jelavich 1990).

Also typically considered important, elites create a national history, perhaps even a creation myth, for the nation. Palacky did so for Czechs (Morison 1995); Karamzin for Russians (Hosking 1997). Jesuits, expelled by Spain, took revenge by writing national histories for Latin America territories, such as Chile and Mexico (Fuentes 1992). Common features of nationalist histories are a demonstration that the nation has existed a long time, and that it had a glorious past at some point. This glorious past often has a single focus, such as a golden age presided over by a single ruler, or even a single battle, such as the battle of Kosovo Polje for Serbs (Malcolm 1998).

Elites may produce nationalistic literature, such as Manzoni's novel *I Promessi Sposi* for Italy. They may produce nationalistic music, such as Smetana's operas, Verdi's operas, and Chopin's polonaises. They may establish nationalist celebrations, such as the song festivals of Latvia and Estonia (Lieven 1994). Finally – and now we are crossing over into the area of political organization for nationalism – they may engage in direct proselytizing for nationalism, such as the 'Go to the People' movement in late nineteenth century Russia (Kaiser 1994).

On the political side, elites frequently try to invoke, organize, or create nationalism in pursuit of political ends (Brass 1991; Breuilly 1993; Ignatieff 1993; Snyder 2000). Elites in a sub-territory of a state may organize popular expressions of nationalism or an entire political movement seeking separation, autonomy, or simply more favorable treatment. Elites may use nationalism to overthrow the government, especially if state is a colony, that is, the government is perceived to come from another state. Governments themselves commonly try to promote nationalism, in order to facilitate actions such as waging war, redistributing wealth, controlling people's behaviour in various ways, and collecting taxes, and to suppress alternative nationalisms.

Governments of course have government apparatus itself at their disposal. They have control over public education, which resembles the cultural promotion of nationalism, except that public education typically is coerced, and within public education things happen like the suppression of unofficial languages. Frequently governments draft ordinary people into a national army, which they may attempt to use as a tool for nationalist indoctrination (Hermet 1996). Governments may organize nationalist organizations of adults and of children. They declare nationalist holidays and commemorations, and organize nationalist parades and celebrations. Increasingly important as technology of mass communication has improved, governments often control the mass media, such as newspapers, radio, and television, either directly or indirectly. They can thus control information concerning nations and their deeds, or even exhort people to nationalistic action, as in the case of the 1994 Rwandan genocide (Snyder

2000). Governments also engage in suppression of alternative nationalisms. They may suppress unofficial languages in public and in government, as well as in education. They may suppress organization of alternative nationalisms.

Because they have less force at their disposal, anti-government nationalist elites typically have more difficulty in organizing nationalism politically than do governments. What they can do will depend on how much the government suppresses their activities. Nevertheless, they may use many of the same techniques: creating and leading nationalist organizations, controlling public education, organizing nationalist celebrations, suppressing the official (government) language and in fact the official nationalism, drafting people into a nationalist rebel army, and dispensing information and misinformation and making emotional appeals through the media.

A recent version of the thesis that elites create nationalism through political means holds that the state – the relevant elites here – may be able to create nations and popular nationalism through institutionalizing nations. That is, suppose a state creates categories that are nations, assigns people to those categories, and perhaps orients policies to those categories. By doing so it may create, even if inadvertently, popular nationalism oriented around those categories (e.g., Brubaker 1996).

However, whether promotion of nationalism by elites is cultural or political or some combination of the two, just because in many places a great deal of such promotion precedes popular nationalism does not mean that it caused the nationalism. Even when popular nationalism adopts cultural aspects of nationalism advanced by the elite – such as myths, history, even the standardized language – it does not follow that the elite have caused the nationalism itself. A lower status population may ape the eating manners and even the cuisine of their betters, but their betters have nothing to do with the fact that they want to eat! Likewise, even when a nationalistic populace acquiesces to the political order created by nationalistic elites, it does not follow that the elites have caused the nationalism itself. Lower status hunters may join the hunt led by their betters, and acquiesce to their betters' leadership in the hunt, but again their betters have nothing to do with the fact that they want the fruits of the hunt.

In fact I suggest that erroneous claims that elites create popular nationalism have been made through a conjuncture of two methodological errors. The primary error is that almost all treatments of nationalism use Mill's flawed *method of similarity*. That is, empirical attention is paid to positive instances of a transition from elite to popular nationalism with little attention given to negative instances where that link is lacking, or where mechanisms fail that elites supposedly use successfully elsewhere. The secondary error is a case of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. That is, the apparent reasoning is that since in almost all of these positive cases elites are nationalistic or promote nationalism before ordinary people are nationalistic, their behaviour must be the cause of popular nationalism.

There is no question that almost always some elites are associated with

popular nationalisms. However, we need not accept the positive association as proof of causation, for there are alternative explanations for such association. One reason is a selection process: it is likely that elites often provide superior organization and other advantages, which makes nationalisms with elites more likely to succeed or at least endure (Kaufman 2001). A second reason is one of elite entrepreneurship. Namely, latent nationalism provides fertile ground for political entrepreneurs. They appear from some sector of the elite – relatively failed intellectuals, clergy, failing politicians – and attempt to ride the nationalist tiger to more prominence and power.

If we cast our gaze more thoroughly and less selectively at world history, we find many examples that run counter to claimed 'elites create popular nationalism' processes. We find cases of failed elite nationalisms – cases where an elite nationalism is succeeded by a popular nationalism with a different object. We find places where nationalism promoted by the elite is only incompletely matched by popular nationalism. We find territories in which popular nationalism occurs before or simultaneously with elite nationalism. These cases show that elite nationalism is not sufficient for popular nationalism, nor is it necessary, except perhaps in the minimal way that some leaders must emerge to give popular nationalism a voice and focus. The inescapable conclusion is that elite nationalism is not a cause of popular nationalism.

To be convincing, any macro-level claims, such as that elites create or cause popular nationalism, need two legs of support. First, the claims must be theoretically plausible; we must be able to see how what they postulate could happen at the level of the individual behaviour (Boudon 1984; Weber 1968 [1922]). Here, I do not challenge the theoretical plausibility of claims that elites create popular nationalism. Second, the claims must have empirical support. Ideally, the historical record should show that, *ceteris paribus*, when elites promote nationalism, ordinary people soon adopt that nationalism, and when elites do not, ordinary people do not. To debunk the claims we must show a sufficient number of clear cases in which elites promote nationalism that is not adopted by ordinary people or in which ordinary people adopt nationalism not or only belatedly promoted by elites. Again, note that I do not claim that some instances of nationalism have no associated elites, but rather that elite promotions of nationalism often fail.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

My procedure here is simply to point out counterexamples in order to question the causal link between elite and popular nationalism that is a frequent inference from examination of only positive cases. In the negative cases, the extent to which elites promoted popular nationalism varies considerably, as do the means elites used to do so. Thus we have intellectual advocacy, creation of a single language, nationalistic proselytizing

efforts by intellectuals, government-mandated education, and active government suppression of ethnic groups that are not assimilating. What these negative cases all have in common is that the popular nationalism being promoted did not take.

Let us start with central and south-eastern Europe, a region obviously important for the study of nationalism. Prominent early Bulgarian nationalist activists tended to be in favour of a Balkan rather than Bulgarian republic (Crampton 1997). Yugoslavism (South Slavism) was to be the nationalism uniting the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and its successor state, Yugoslavia. While some see this nationalism and its object state as a Serb ploy to run southern Slav lands, we may note that it did have support among non-Serb urbanites and intellectuals (Jelavich 1990; Kaufman 2001). For example, Gavrilo Princip, who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand and thus triggered World War I, began as a Bosnian nationalist but became a Yugoslav nationalist and shot the Archduke as such (Malcolm 1994). Kaufman refers to Stjepan Radic as the 'lone Croat opponent of the Yugoslav idea in 1918' (Kaufman 2001: 175).[2]

Further to the east, the Tsarist empire in the nineteenth century and the Soviet Union in the twentieth tried to 'russify' many non-Russian parts of their domain, including the Ukraine, the Baltic lands, and territories in the Caucasus. Their method was primarily through education, including encouragement of learning Russian (Hosking 1997; Kaiser 1994). Clearly, this extensive, enduring endeavour failed almost completely. Below the level of official action, after 1870 populist movements of nationalistic elites, such as the 'Go to the People' movement, attempted to arouse nationalism among peasants. Peasants generally rejected these movements also (Kaiser 1994).

Consider Slovakia, which, excluding an ambiguous period during World War II, only achieved statehood in the 1990s. In the nineteenth century, and until Austria-Hungary's defeat in World War I, Slovakia was ruled by Hungary. In the first half of the nineteenth century, both Slovak and Czech intellectuals tended to endorse 'pan-Slavism' (Morison 1995). Subsequently, Hungary made extensive efforts to 'magyarize' Slovakia's population, and in fact Slovakia's top elites were magyarized. Every social movement has spokespeople, however, so, with other top elites unavailable, the clergy became prominent among early twentieth century nationalists in Slovakia. The other complication in Slovakia was the strong presence, often dominance, of *Czechoslovaks* among elite nationalists. Czechoslovaks favoured a single country and anticipated an eventually unified Czechoslovak culture. Yet finally when ordinary Slovakians were able to vote freely, they backed separatist parties and the Velvet Divorce took place (Leff 1995).

In short, we see Slovak intellectuals advocating pan-Slavism, then a state strongly encouraging Hungarian identity, then subsequent states encouraging often Czechoslovak nationalism and certainly not Czech and Slovak nationalisms separately. We see top elites Hungarian and subsequently

Czechoslovak in their nationalism, with lesser elites frequently, especially initially, Czechoslovak. Yet the popular nationalism that eventuated was Slovakian. History makes it difficult to attribute this nationalism to elite creation.

Let us turn next to Western Europe, specifically, Scandinavia, France, and Spain. Norway belonged to Sweden from 1814 until it achieved independence in 1905. In the middle third of the nineteenth century, Norway's elites, its upper classes, were primarily involved in the pan-Scandinavian movement. However, this movement failed to attract the future elites, the students; it also failed to win over the working class, who adopted Norwegian nationalism in the last third of the century (Katzenstein 1976). Similarly, while initially popular among elites and students in Denmark and Sweden, pan-Scandinavianism never caught on among ordinary people in those countries and faded by the last third of the nineteenth century (Mikael af Malmborg 1992).

Consider the region of Brétagne in France. There, popular support for Breton as opposed to French ethnicity was stronger in the later part of the twentieth century than in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet in the earlier period national French culture, including knowledge of the language, was far from ubiquitous, whereas by the later period French elites had succeeded in transferring major features of the culture, including knowledge of French, to all Bretons (Berger 1972; Johansson 1992).

In Spain we see two failures of the elite nationalism produces popular nationalism thesis. All of the regions currently comprising Spain have been united in a single state since the sixteenth century. Spanish identity is strong in all regions except two, Catalonia and the Basque country. In the twentieth century, those regions have exhibited a strong popular nationalism with the *region* as its object, which has led to an enduring quest for autonomous or even separate status. The first failure then is that the Spanish central government has failed to produce popular Spanish nationalism in Catalonia and the Basque country despite efforts to do so. In fact, Spain has spent a large part of the twentieth century under dictatorships, those of Primo de Rivera and Franco, that strongly suppressed regional nationalisms and promoted Spanish nationalism (Conversi 1997; Díez Medrano 1995; Martinez y Riqué 1992).

The second failure is that regional nationalisms in the two anomalous regions have not been led by prominent elites of the regions. Catalonia and the Basque country were the first two regions of Spain to industrialize and still are its more industrialized regions. Consequently, they developed a capitalist bourgeoisie earlier than other areas. Yet those economic elites largely have been ineffective in their effects on popular nationalism. In the Basque country, popular nationalism has developed in spite of the bourgeoisie. The Basque bourgeoisie has been Castilianized and has participated in the Castilian power structure since the Middle Ages, and has not been interested in Basque nationalism (Conversi 1997; Díez Medrano 1995; Flynn 2000; Martinez y Riqué 1992; Puhle 1982; Shafir 1995).

As for the Catalonian bourgeoisie, while it became more Catalonian and less Castilian in the nineteenth century, for the past century and a half it has fluctuated in its support for Catalan nationalism. From 1898 until the end of World War I, for example, the Catalonian bourgeoisie were at the forefront of Catalan nationalism, leading its primary political organization, the Lliga Regionalista. However, involvement of the Lliga in national coalition governments at the end of the war lost the Lliga much of its popular nationalist support. Subsequent collaboration of the Lliga with the anti-regionalist Rivera dictatorship led to its eclipse. In summary, initially the Catalonian bourgeoisie appeared to lead Catalan nationalism, but ultimately it was not able to lead that nationalism where it wanted that nationalism to go (Conversi 1997; Díez Medrano 1995; Martinez y Riqué 1992; Shafir 1995).

In short, in twentieth century Spain we see authoritarian governments using the extraordinary powers of such governments to promote Spanish nationalism and eradicate Catalonian and Basque nationalisms. We see important regional elites failing to exhibit regional identity themselves, or failing to exhibit it consistently, and certainly unable to direct its manifestation among ordinary people. The logical conclusion is that the strong regional nationalisms that have emerged and persisted in those regions have done so not *because of* but, if anything, *in spite of* the loyalties and actions of important elites.

Pan-Africanism is the name given to a set of ideas propounded by leading African intellectuals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These ideas centered around the notions that Africans' identity as Africans could and should be paramount, and that this identity would be a basis for unity of Africans. The movement however failed to have resonance among ordinary people (Harneit-Sievers 1994; Mährdel 1994). It had some last gasps, such as the short-lived Mali Federation in 1959–60, and Nyerere's early 1960s proposal to unite Kenya, Zanzibar, Tanganyika, and Uganda. However, ordinary people's loyalties remained to much smaller territories and groups (Mährdel 1994).

In a somewhat analogous fashion, Arab nationalism or pan-Arabism was promoted by many Arab elites, but ultimately failed as a nationalism (Hobsbawm 1990; Kramer 1993; Lewis 1998). Gingrich (1994) describes how elites in both North and South Yemen promoted Pan-Arabism yet this never caught on among ordinary Yemenis. Rather, popular nationalism was oriented to the territory of Yemen, which had been divided politically since the end of Ottoman rule early in the twentieth century and had not been a single independent state in any sense for centuries. Following the end of the Cold War, which had sustained the division of Yemen, the elites of the two states duly followed popular sentiment and fused their states (and governments). Similarly, rulers of various Muslim countries over the past century have promoted pan-Islamism, but such an appeal too has yet to succeed (Lewis 1998).

WHAT ELITES DO

Even if they do not *create* popular nationalism, elites usually affect its expression, often intentionally. Otherwise stated, they exercise *power* concerning the expression of popular nationalism, using a variety of power processes (cf. Mann 1986; Whitmeyer 1997b). Elites may provide occasion and opportunity for the expression of nationalism; they may organize it; they may provide relevant information, whether lies, half-lies or truths. State elites, that is, governments, especially may remove negative sanctions or administer positive sanctions for the expression of nationalism. For anti-govermental elites, public advocacy may be especially effective, not because the nationalistic *content* of the message spreads to other people, but because of information public advocacy itself conveys. Namely, it helps overcome pluralistic ignorance about the prevalence of popular nationalism, and it suggests to nationalistic people that expression of that nationalism, non-violent and probably even violent, will not be sanctioned negatively and probably will be sanctioned positively. There may be some effect of the content of the message delivered by elites also. Namely, information provided may heighten the emotions of nationalism, for example by combining them with fear, and thus stimulate more extreme, often more violent behaviours.

In short, I agree with many analysts of nationalism (e.g., Brass 1991; Breuilly 1993; Kaufman 2001; Snyder 2000) that elites are usually important to the expression of popular nationalism, and certainly often manipulate it in order to profit from it. However, I stop short of saying they ever directly cause or create popular nationalism. In effect, I am arguing that the *direct* role of elites in the expression of popular nationalism is similar to that of organizers in revolutions and rebellions. Research seems to show that activity of organizers – typically elites – makes it much more likely that revolts will occur, but is not sufficient to bring revolts about, by any means (Migdal 1974; Wickham-Crowley 1991; Tilly 1978). In this section I discuss several examples that illustrate and demonstrate these points.

Before the examples, however, it should be noted that most explanations of nationalism that would deny that elites create nationalism *directly* still would allow that elites can affect the creation of nationalism *indirectly* by affecting the conditions that produce nationalism. Rationalist explanations such as those of Gellner (1997) and Breuilly (1993) that hold that nationalism will arise under certain social conditions, typically those of the industrial period, imply that elites can encourage nationalism by industrializing. If communication is the key to nationalism (Deutsch 1966; Katzenstein 1976) then elites can encourage a certain nationalism by affecting means of communication, either to expand communication or to constrain it. Similarly, if nationalism tends to correspond to people's minimal endogamous set (Whitmeyer 1997a), then elites can encourage a certain nationalism by affecting geographical mobility and urbanization.

Let us turn to the examples. To demonstrate limits to what elites can do, it is useful to look at cases where they have failed. Now, logically we can guess that it will not be often that elites fail to mobilize nationalism and nationalistic behaviour. This is because elites who attempt to use nationalism and ethnic divisions for their own purposes almost always think to do so because national and ethnic divisions are already apparent, that is, behaviourally present.

Nevertheless, there are some examples of failure. In 1809, the Austrian emperor attempted to arouse nationalistic opposition to Napoleon in the German lands, but failed utterly (Katzenstein 1976; Schulze 1996). This is not a case of German nationalism being overridden by a stronger dislike of the Austrian emperor. Note that in Prussia's 1866 war against Austria, most German states supported Austria (Breuilly 1993). There is some sign of a more *regional* nationalism in the German territories during the Napoleonic wars, but popular pan-German nationalism did not appear until the 1840s (Dann 1993).

In some Latin American countries, attempts by elites to arouse nationalism among some indigenous peoples have failed (Hobsbawm 1990). Among the Ixil people of Guatemala in the 1980s, guerrillas attempted to arouse indigenous nationalism against the perennially *mestizo* national government. However, despite being caught in the middle of an extended and nasty war, the Ixil generally did not evince such nationalism. Rather, their interests remained local. To the extent that they freely joined the war, it was because it offered an opportunity to carry on local conflicts (Stoll 1993; 1999). Likewise, in Chiapas, Mexico, indigenist appeals by the Zapatista rebels to highland indigenous people to join in their 1994 rebellion fell on deaf ears, except for a few instances where it offered opportunities to pursue local vendettas (Whitmeyer and Hopcroft 1996).

A case where elites provided occasion and opportunity for the expression of popular nationalism – or perhaps 'religionism' would be better – is the period leading up to the creation in 1947 of independent successor states to British-ruled India. Muslim, Hindu, and Sikh leaders created organizations representing their respective groups and, together with British representatives, negotiated the end of British rule and the partition of British-ruled India into two successor states, India and Pakistan, at least the latter explicitly 'religionistic'. The elite-arranged British departure and partition provided the occasion and opportunity – and removed negative sanctions – for violent expression of 'religionism'. An horrendous slaughter ensued, the worst of it in the partitioned province of the Punjab where at least six hundred thousand people perished. Yet although they brought it about indirectly, elites did not organize or lead the slaughter. Indeed, the enormity of the problem in the Punjab probably is due to the *lack* of leadership and hierarchical control, due mostly to the imminent and then actual departure of the British (Brown 1994; Das 1982).

As for nationalistic behaviour led or organized by elites, examples are numerous. Just in recent years, Russian troops have slaughtered Chechens

(Remnick 1997); Serbian and Bosnian Serbs have exterminated Bosnian Muslims under the direction of the Serbian government and its agents (Sudetic 1998); Rwandan Hutus have wiped out huge numbers of Tutsis in genocide organized and led by Rwanda's Hutu government (D. N. Smith 1998; Snyder 2000); and Sinhalese have murdered Tamils in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo using target lists supplied by some organizers (Tambiah 1986), perhaps even by the Sinhalese government (Kearney 1986; McGowan 1992). Information relevant to the expression of popular nationalism frequently accompanies elite organization of such behaviour. Thus, prior to and during the 1994 genocide, the Rwandan Hutu government flooded Rwandan media with venomous anti-Tutsi propaganda (D. N. Smith 1998; Snyder 2000). Similarly, during the 1970s and 1980s the Sinhalese political elite filled the press with information to make Sinhalese resentful and fearful of Tamils (McGowan 1992).

Finally, numerous examples exist of governments affecting expression of nationalism by altering sanctions associated with it. Relaxing of anti-nationalist pressure from the Soviet Union in subject territories led to more and more public displays of nationalism (Garton Ash 1993; Lieven 1994). Germany's Nazi government and other European fascist governments made it clear that anti-Jewish behaviour would not be punished, leading to a rise in such behaviour in many places. Sri Lankan law enforcement forces went from punishing anti-Tamil actions by Sinhalese, to tolerating them, to encouraging them, which seems to have promoted an increase in such actions (Tambiah 1986).

Thus in many, perhaps most, cases we can credit elites with having a strong effect on the *expression* of popular nationalism, though not with creating the nationalism. Moreover, in all these cases we also must acknowledge the passions and emotions that typically come to the forefront during such nationalistic behaviours (Calhoun 1993; Horowitz 1985; Kaufman 2001; McGowan 1992) and probably serve as proximate mechanisms in individuals bringing about their participation. Such affect overcomes the free rider problem that can plague attempts at collective action (Olson 1965). These emotions cannot be credited completely to efforts of elites, for example, through propaganda. For, as with the slaughter that accompanied the partition of India, they can appear in all their virulence when elites have little part in it. Moreover, even totalitarian elites have not been terribly effective at arousing such passions in other arenas, such as enthusiasm for Communism (Chirot 1990; Havel 1985; Remnick 1993).

As a last issue, let us look at examples of how elites *indirectly* may affect the creation of nationalism. For example, political boundaries separating states and populations may affect social processes such as communication patterns and marriage patterns. Thus Horowitz (1992) states that irredentisms are relatively rare, since boundaries often affect ethnic identities. The boundary between Hungary and Slovakia apparently is resulting in the assimilation of the approximately 100,000 residents of Hungary of Slovak descent (Haynes 1995). Since World War II, the boundary between Austria

and Germany seems to have created separate nationalisms (Katzenstein 1976).

However, state boundaries also are overcome not infrequently. The long-lasting political boundary between the two Yemens is an example mentioned earlier of a boundary that failed to create separate nationalisms (Gingrich 1994). Following the collapse of Communism in East Germany, East and West Germany reunited almost instantly. Considerable popular support for a united Korea apparently persists in North and South Korea (Kranewitter 1994). Even the boundary between Austria and Germany took many years to create true Austrian popular nationalism. Katzenstein (1976) notes the tremendous popular support for unification with Germany in Austria between the two world wars, and further adduces strong evidence for widespread popular support in Austria for the united state created by the Nazi *Anschluss* while it lasted. Sahlins (1998) notes that the France-Spain boundary through the Cerdanya valley led inhabitants to use identification with France or Spain in disputes. However, he also notes that people made such identification for their antagonists, not for themselves. Moreover, Macbeth (1993) alleges that identification in the Cerdanya valley continues to be primarily with the valley not with France or Spain, despite the fact that division of the valley between France and Spain has existed since 1660 and a boundary line has existed since 1868.

Lastly, consider Brubaker's (1996) premise that the Soviet Union created nationalism in many of its republics through institutionalizing nations. That is, the government classified people into nationalities, kept people aware of those classifications, and oriented some policies toward those nationality classifications (Brubaker 1996). I suggest that if his premise is true, it is due to some indirect process. For example, nationality-oriented policies could have affected patterns of communication or endogamy and thus the nationalisms that developed. However, it is likely too that the Soviet government correctly anticipated national identifications that were likely to form with modernization of its territories, given for example the distribution of urban centres likely to attract rural migrants, and the distribution of other characteristics such as religion and language. Hosking (2001) notes that recently opened archives show that those responsible for determining the official nations of the Soviet state did so seriously, with attention to a variety of relevant information.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have presented numerous cases, from a variety of time periods and places, in which elites have failed to bring about a nationalism they promoted, or in which nationalism has developed with little leadership by elites. These cases are strong counter-examples to the thesis, in some form popular among scholars of nationalism, that elites create or cause nationalism. They thus also cast doubt on the view of nationalism that sees it as primarily the result of the influence of invented ideas.

The counter-thesis that elites do *not* create nationalism, and explanations of nationalism that support that counter-thesis, are generally compatible with the view that elites can have a direct effect on the *expression* of nationalism. This will occur most obviously when prior to elite action there is little opportunity or incentive for much expression of the nationalism by the population, and thus it is more-or-less latent. Elites can create the opportunity and incentive – with results of a magnitude that elite actions can bring about in few other areas.

A case in point is that of Sri Lanka, which obtained independence from Great Britain in a condition of apparent ethnic harmony between Sinhalese and Tamils, a condition that lasted until 1956. In 1956 a politician, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, won an upset victory in national elections on a platform of replacing English with Sinhalese as the sole national language (Kearney 1967). That platform was all about favouring the substantial Sinhalese majority (about 74 per cent of the population) at the expense of the Tamil minority (about 13 per cent) (Kearney 1986). Given the presented opportunity to be nationalistic, Sinhalese took it; other Sinhalese politicians quickly adopted pro-Sinhalese positions as well, and Sri Lanka's slide into nationalistic hatred and butchery had begun.

Note too with the Sri Lankan case that while it is possible to blame some Sinhalese leaders, for example, Bandaranaike, this would miss the essence of the phenomenon. For clearly the potential for nationalistic behaviour was there in the population (Phadnis 1989); all it needed was some politician to give it opportunity for expression. If Bandaranaike had not done so, sooner or later some other politician would have (see Harneit-Sievers 1994 concerning a similar situation in Nigeria of the 1950s and early 1960s). Ironically, the elite in Sri Lanka, including both Sinhalese and Tamils, themselves apparently have not been nationalistic – that is, anti-Tamil or anti-Sinhalese (McGowan 1992).

The number and variety of counter-examples suggests that in fact there is no causal link between elite and popular nationalism, and that popular nationalism in fact is not somehow the result of some spread of ideas from the elite. Again, elites are often ones who manipulate and profit by popular nationalism. Some make its expression acceptable, such as Hitler and Bandaranaike. Some even organize and lead persecution of other groups as has occurred in Nazi Germany, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka. Some make it coalesce through political changes that raise fears and change opportunities and incentives, such as wars and partitions of territories. Yet none of those activities is quite the same as creating nationalism. What we might call 'latent nationalism', the potential for nationalistic behaviour, must be there. Then elites create the means for its expression, and take advantage of that expression.

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1. Status characteristics theory deals with the social psychology of such attributes (called 'diffuse status characteristics') and their effects (see, e.g., Wagner and Berger 1993).

2. Analysis even of the obviously successful nationalisms that rose in the post-Tito breakup of Yugoslavia suggests it would be wrong to consider these nationalisms to have been created (or re-created) by elites, the prominent role of nationalistic elites in that breakup notwithstanding. For example, while the Serbian leader Milošević clearly used the many powers of the state to push Serbian nationalism, he seized upon nationalism because it already had popular resonance in Serbia. Likewise, resistance in Slovenia and Croatia to Milošević and his programme of Serbian dominance was based in part on already existing popular nationalisms in those regions (Kaufman 2001). Indeed, Tito had to suppress nationalisms in Croatia and Kosovo that grew in strength in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Ramet 1992).

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