# II. Postcolonial Nationalism

## 2. Nationalism in Postcolonial States

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IN MOST COUNTRIES that experienced some form of direct colonial rule, nationalism emerged as a political and intellectual movement embraced by a broad spectrum of social elites. Nationalist leaders of varying backgrounds shared a common interest in extricating the nation from colonial rule and in establishing an independent nation-state with a distinct, unified national identity. In most cases, however, the common bond that had been crafted during the course of the independence movement was subsequently challenged by divisive tendencies—some new, some historically entrenched—after national independence had been achieved. This, in turn, made the erstwhile unifying bond of nationalism difficult to sustain. An increasingly common type of divisive force has been the rise of multiple *internal* nationalisms, often within a common ethnic frame, calling for special rights or secession.

Indeed, consistent with the analysis presented by Lowell Barrington in the volume's introduction, we may suggest a broad analytical division between those postcolonial nations that have been able to continue to forge nationalist unity and those nations marked by internal ethnic nationalist challenges. In the first case, political systems continue to be characterized by the consolidation (however uneven) of a strong civic nationalist spirit, which, as Barrington indicates, generally reflects ties among political elites from divergent political and ethnic backgrounds who share a commitment to common political rules and institutions. Here we may suggest that in the cases of Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius, and possibly South Africa, such elites have created inclusivistic polyarchical regimes, nearly consociational in structure, based on accommodation, negotiation, and the fundamental acceptability of autonomous social interests.[1]

The second pattern in postcolonial nations has been marked by the degeneration of civic nationalist unity in the wake of parochial, "ethnic nation-protecting"[2] political claimants, while narrowly based patrimonial regimes cling to power by relying on a praetorian, centralist, and exclusivist pattern of rule.[3] In the worst cases, including Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo,[4] the nation-state breaks apart (formally or de facto) into either separate communal movements with ethnonationalist aggrandizing goals or mixed interethnic movements with separatist goals, in both cases with sufficient social support and military resources to ensure the perpetuation of relatively circumscribed ethnopolitical, territorial goals.[5]

The three countries examined in detail in part 2 of the book—Malaysia, Somalia, and Rwanda—provide particularly dramatic examples of each of these two development lines. Malaysia exemplifies a torturous road toward a relatively successful polyarchical regime construction (in recent years), while Somalia and Rwanda are cases in which nationalism became diffused into a multitude of highly parochial interests that assumed a zero-sum, nonnegotiable political stance. In Somalia, this led to the eventual breakup of the nation-state, and in Rwanda it led to genocide.[6]

The Malaysian case has been paralleled by the postcolonial polities of Suriname, Singapore, and Mauritius, where long-term policies of inclusion in ethnically plural social contexts eventually produced cross-segmentary ties and political cooperation among ethnic elites.[7] In the eyes of some observers, the South African case suggests the recent emergence of sufficient cross-ethnic accommodation to generate a similar type of polyarchical, cooperative nationalism.[8] However, it should be noted that this effort at interelite accommodation in South Africa has not proven entirely successful, as some leaders have used their entry into national politics to play an ethnic political card, leading one analyst to claim that instrumentalist ethnic mobilization and intercommunal strife intensified in the mid-to-late 1990s.[9] Still, it does appear that a relatively substantial segment of political leaders from most of the key social groups remains strongly committed to building civic nationalism in South Africa, and no serious effort at ethnic secession has as yet been initiated (Zulu nationalism brokered by some instrumentalist leaders remains a serious problem, but secession has not emerged as a realistic proposition). Malaysian nationalist evolution provides a possible role model for South Africa, as ethnic accommodation,

following an early postcolonial history of exclusion, has thus far succeeded in keeping extreme interethnic strife at bay.

This contrasts starkly with the cases of postcolonial Somalia and Rwanda. There, the social fabric of the nation-state has been shattered in the past decade by intensive internal warfare, the secession of Somaliland engineered by the northern Isaaq people, and genocidal massacres of Tutsi followed by massive migrations of Hutu out of Rwanda and into the Democratic Republic of the Congo (which in turn helped to stimulate secessionist warfare in that troubled state). In regard to these events, one can argue that the mismatch between the national/territorial and ethnic community during colonial rule in many parts of Africa and Asia—also including Sudan, Chad, Ethiopia-Oromo, Eritrea, Pakistan-Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka—helped generate an extended period of unresolved communal and irredentist strife after independence. This dramatized the ill-advised placement of national borders across ethnically shared zones, a problem that has yet to be addressed by government leaders and that helps to preclude the emergence of civic nationalism. Barrington's observation that the territorial division of ethnic groups can profoundly affect the course of nationalist evolution, and help to generate serious secessionist or irredentist claims,[10] is verified in the cases of Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea, and much of South Asia.

### Additional Factors Affecting Postcolonial Nationalist Elites

The causal factors discussed in the introduction—including the failure to capture all of the perceived national homeland, the presence of internal and external threats to territorial integrity and cultural survival, and the existence of threatened co-nationals abroad—are all clearly important elements of the dynamic evolution of postcolonial nationalism. At the same time, I would suggest that three additional factors may be identified that affect the ability of elites to pursue nationalist policies and to mobilize the mass populace to support nationalist parties in postindependence contexts. These three additional factors are (1) the colonial legacy of ethnoregional policy preferences (equitable or discriminatory), (2) the social bases of support for civic versus ethnic nationalists, and (3) the density of social structures and nature of traditional belief systems. A brief discussion of these factors provides a contextual framework for understanding the particular cases of Somalia, Malaysia, and Rwanda.

Colonial Legacies

In the first place, we may point out that the postcolonial state's reaction to the ethnic and ethnoregional inequities engineered by colonial boundary makers has proven significant in setting the stage for the subsequent resolution of colonially created ethnic cleavages. The case of India is especially noteworthy here, as its postcolonial leaders immediately decided to annul the 580 princely states that existed at independence, replacing them with new provincial boundaries that did not coincide with the older states. Although this initially precipitated a number of new insurgencies and subregional political movements, in the long run this boundary restructuring also appeared to forestall more serious ethnopolitical strife and lay the social foundations for a relatively unifying civic nationalism.[11]

In contrast, the consolidation of civic nationalism has proven particularly challenging in Africa, where state leaders have often elected to provide preferential treatment to ethnic allies despite analytic claims regarding pluralistic tolerance. The case of Rwanda, as chapter 4 makes clear, presents a particularly compelling example of such preferential treatment as having been initiated by colonial decision making, although ethnic favoritism did not assume a prominent regional character. Instead, the colonialists ensured the consolidation of Tutsi leadership and the social, political, and economic exclusion of Hutu throughout the national territory. This favoritism set the stage for the genesis of Tutsi and Hutu political consciousness and activism in the postcolonial period. As conflict between the two communities began to occur, the country did not become divided into ethnoregions; Hutu and Tutsi political mobilization each increasingly assumed a nationwide territorial claim.

In Somalia, as Peter Schraeder makes clear in a particularly insightful analysis in chapter 5, the tripartite colonialist division among British, French, and Italian Somaliland was never adequately addressed after independence. It subsequently proved a major fault line in the disintegration of the Somali nation-state—beginning in Mogadishu itself and initially manifested by a general split between northern-based and southern-based political groupings. This further degenerated into multiple intraclan divisions in the south, but in the north Somaliland reemerged as a coherent political entity. Schraeder indicates that, although this likely spells the end of any potential for pan-Somali nationalism, it does suggest the regionally specific basis on which a new political stability can be reached, presuming

(he argues) that the international community provides support for a nego-
tiated, territorially based compromise.

In view of the civil disarray and dissipation of civic nationalist national-
ism occurring in much of Africa, not only in Somalia and Rwanda, one may
note that the decision to avoid challenging the colonial-state-engineered
internal boundaries after independence ended up perpetuating state-ethnic
mismatches and helped set the stage for internal strife and the dissipation
of early-stage postcolonial civic nationalist movements. However, we may
also observe that, in some African cases, after a generation of internal
conflict, the installment of new regimes was intended to create the basis for
new regional restructurings that leaders hoped would diminish past griev-
ances and begin the process of creating a civic nationalist spirit.

Thus, in the 1990s, leaders in Ethiopia, Ghana, Zambia, Namibia, and
South Africa redrew their respective internal boundaries in part in order to
reduce the perception of exclusion and to move toward a more balanced
allocation of benefits to long-ignored regions.[12] To be sure, the building of
civic nationalist feeling remains tenuous in all these cases, as the incentive
of the new national elites appears to reflect instrumentalist manipulation to
ensure that ethnoregions support the new central governments rather than
simply the elites' desire to achieve nation-state unification. Nonetheless, in
the long run these new redistrictings could facilitate the emergence of more
stable, if somewhat smaller-scale, nation-states that are more contiguous
with ethnically coherent, regionally based political support structures. In
some cases, a redistricting that provides more (or full) autonomy to regions
historically marked by internal *interethnic* cooperation and unified mobi-
lization against a hegemonic state—such as occurred in the case of
Eritrea—could also prove favorable to improved stability and to the even-
tual reconstruction of civic nationalism.[13]

### Social Bases of Support: Civic or Ethnic Nationalist? Dual Identity or Dual Nationalism?

In the introduction, Barrington portrays civic nation-building as reflecting
a shared perception among political elites in newly independent states that
unifying political motifs are central to the achievement of stablity and
national political development. In regard to mass behavior in particular, it
is important to investigate the extent to which civic nationalism in post-
colonial states displaces a more narrow value framework that emphasizes
ethnic nationalism. In the relatively successful case of Malaysia (and else-

where in South Asia), it is telling to note that a form of what Diane Mauzy refers to in chapter 3 as *dual identity* has emerged that reflects not so much the convergence but rather the coexistence of a civic and an ethnic identity. In Malaysia—as in other (but not all) parts of South Asia—this dual identity has reflected the predominance of the civic aspect in recent years, in turn bearing positively on national unity.[14]

In contrast to South Asia, the spread of autonomy-seeking movements in parts of Africa makes clear the limited citizen engagement with the nation-state.[15] The Rwandan and Somali cases, as described in chapters 4 and 5, provide additional evidence of the difficulty, in Africa, of generating a civic culture. John Clark offers an unorthodox analysis of ethnic politics in Rwanda by suggesting the emergence of a "dual nationalism," in which Hutu leaders instrumentally engineered a particularly violent form of ethnic politicization. Tutsi ethnic politics was more reactive in character, with political parties forming in response to Hutu aggression. Clark argues in chapter 4 that this led to the crystallization of two national identities and ethnonational movements within the same country—that is, within what he refers to as "overlapping territorial spaces." This form of ethnic nationalism  precluded the evolution of civic nationalism, as it was conceived through efforts to create a Hutu national state and a Tutsi national state on the same territory, generating a zero-sum politics of violence.

Clark's interpretation of the Rwandan conflict as struggles between national communities is important conceptually because—in responding to the query posed in the introduction, "Who is the nation?"—the Rwandan analysis resurrects the older view of nationalism as reflecting a singular people sharing a myth of common descent searching for a state or for political autonomy. This conceptualization of nationalism has been emphasized in the work of Connor for the past four decades,[16] and it is especially helpful in understanding the emergence of repeated episodes of mass violence.

In the case of postindependence Somalia, as Schraeder shows, inter- and intraclan warfare among members of the same ethnic group makes clear that ethnic and state confluence do not necessarily make for postnationalist unity. Still, Rwanda, Somalia, and other cases marked by inter- or intracommunal warfare may be viewed as extreme ends of a more typically ambiguous range of civic attachments. In regard to Kenya, for example, Ndegwa argues that despite the instrumentalist tendencies of many Kenyan

political elites, civic nationalism pervades ordinary people's consciousness to the point that it is possible to speak of "dual citizenship."[17] By this Ndegwa refers to loyalties flowing to either the nation or the ethnic group depending upon circumstance and issue. This somewhat mirrors the "dual identity" described by Mauzy with regard to Malaysia; in Kenya the civic component of nationalism remained relatively latent until the changed circumstances of the 2002 electoral campaign, when pan-Kenyan political integration supplanted the previously communal and instrumentalist character of political mobilization.

Thus, a distinct aspect of postcolonial nationalism in most cases has been the formation of dual civic and ethnic identities, with the outcome of the nationalist movement in part determined by whether civic or ethnic leaders are able to mobilize ordinary citizens in their preferred political direction. Even in Somalia, now considered an extreme case marked by intrastate violence, ethnic mobilizers during the initial postcolonial decades had vied unsuccessfully with civic activists for popular support, and the civic politicians had appeared to generate a degree of attachment to the nation-state to the point that dual civic and ethnic identities pertained. It is important not to fully lose sight of this mixed-identity aspect of the Somali postcolonial trajectory, even though it did not prove durable, for it is more representative of most third-world postcolonial contexts than the preeminence of the factional and communalistic mobilization that has characterized Somalia in recent years.

Density of Social Structures and Traditional Belief Systems

By the density of social structures I refer to the solid, "thick," enduring nature of old, community-based social networks, whose origins are found in precolonial times and which have not been structurally disarticulated by modernizing forces. Dense social structures are marked by strong, locally based sources of authority, economic exchange, and personal ties and provide community refuge from what is so often the unforgiving competitiveness of state-(mis)managed capitalism that pervades the formal economies of many postcolonial nations. Precisely because of the perpetuation of dense social structures in all three cases discussed in this section of the book, as elsewhere in postcolonial contexts, *ordinary communities have been able to make choices about which political elites to support* so that—at

least in part and in certain time periods—peasants and other "mass" groups have helped to determine whether nationalism assumes a broad civic or narrow ethnic form.

Also, in many postcolonial nations, belief systems that originated in ancient times continue to wield a significant impact on the political choices made by the mass populace. The most dramatic example of this is Malaysia. As demonstrated by Mauzy, a traditional, deeply held proclivity to respect central state leadership, along with a historically entrenched reluctance to associate ethnic power with territory, helped represent sociohistorically reinforced values favorable to the production of civic nationalism after independence.

In Somalia, clan societies were historically characterized by segmented political systems without adherence to centralized state structure, and this tradition of social segmentation clearly wielded a more enduring and profound impact in society than did the state-building experience of colonialism or the (brief and superficial) nation-building efforts of the Siad Barre regime. In Rwanda, Clark demonstrates that first Hutu nationalists and then Tutsi nationalists rose to power precisely because they were able to obtain the intensive support of the vast majority of their respective nationalist communities, despite the social reality of intermarriage and interpersonal cooperation that had characterized the recent histories of these two peoples.

This match between social structures, belief systems, and nationalist movements (whether civic or ethnic) highlights the psychological factor in communal mobilization, as suggested in the introduction to this volume. Connor has previously made clear that nationalist movements become meaningful only when elite-level nationalist goals become shared more fully within mass society.[18] If and when nationalist ideologies and strategies coincide with the basic values and belief systems that hold fast at the mass level, they then have the potential to provide the psychological "glue" that helps make the rise of nationalist movements (whether civic or ethnic) possible. It is this psychological factor, reflecting, in part, the particular nature of the density of indigenous social structures, which helps to create the conditions necessary for nationalist ideologies to take root in a popular base and to elicit a mobilizational response from ordinary people. In this respect, it is important to examine already-existing social bases of support for nation-building and to identify the ways in which they may contribute elements of the sociohistorical glue that are essential to the success of a given civic nation-building project.

From Underlying Factors to Instrumentalist Capacity

In the introduction to this volume, Barrington emphasizes that factors consistent with primordial, instrumentalist, and constructivist visions of national identity development each play a role in determining the various courses of action taken by nationalist elites. As the following chapters make clear, the postcolonial cases of Malaysia, Rwanda, and Somalia support such a balanced approach. At the same time, the discussion of causal factors in this chapter highlights ways in which elites are constrained by older, and more recent, contextual political and social influences. In this section, we underline the role of instrumentalist analysis in explaining how nationalist elites are able to successfully craft nationalist movements. This, in turn, requires appreciation of the political skill of nationalist elites in addressing postcolonial problems in ways that appear convincing to substantial segments of the mass public.

This skill is directly related to what this volume refers to as *instrumentalist capacity*—the success or failure of ethnic or civic elites—which we regard as crucial to determining the trajectory of postnationalist politics. To be sure, it is also important to take into account blood-tie bonds and emotional impulses (primoridalism) as well as the social shaping of ethnic perspectives through historical circumstances or state-led manipulations (constructivism). However, instrumentalist ability—the extent to which leaders of ethnic versus civic nationalist movements are able to convince the local populace to support their aims and the determination of political elites to pursue an ethnic or civic course of action—is especially central in explaining postcolonial political outcomes.

Thus, in Somalia, argues Schraeder, an elite pact agreed upon by political leaders helped to shape the early effort at nation-building, while the later devotion of political elites to clan-based militarism and their instrumentalist success in raising popular armies to back their differing claims were central to Somalia's nation-state undoing. We may also mention here the role of (ethnic) "external-territory claiming,"[19] referring to President Siad Barre's invasion of Ethiopia's Ogaadeen region, which is predominantly inhabited by ethnic Somalis. Schraeder makes clear that this wielded a devastating impact on internal pan-Somali nationalist solidarity.

Similarly, for the Rwandan case, Clark indicates the Tutsi-led political regime in Rwanda sent troops into Congo to protect co-Tutsi nationalists—*co-national protecting* in Barrington's terminology—as well

as to ensure the defeat of Hutu armies and to assert sovereignty claims over Congolese regions in which ethnic Tutsis reside. Clark also makes clear the instrumentalist skill of Hutu nationalists in the 1960s through the early 1990s and of Tutsi nationalists as of 1994 in gaining state power, consolidating it, and using it to bolster the interests of the respective nationalist elites. This instrumentalist success was, in part, predicated on the conscious support of the majority of members of each of the two communities, after Hutu and Tutsi identities had been "constructed" by Belgian colonialists and after ethnic violence had been organized and perpetrated by political elites.

In Malaysia, by contrast, Mauzy describes a postcolonial progression from a narrowly constructed, quasi-primordial nationalism during the early stages of mass politics to a more instrumental concern with specific elite interests. However, Mauzy also insightfully indicates points at which instrumental efforts "to construct" or maneuver certain identities did not succeed. She furthermore emphasizes the extent to which a historically grounded perspective can often prove complementary to a full appreciation of the ebb and flow of instrumentalist politics, one of the important contributions of her study to the broader understanding of nationalism after independence.

In all of these cases, the combination of primordial mass motivation with historically generated constructivist identities proved to be important aspects of postcolonial nationalism, but those motivations and identities were only fully mobilized once political elites assumed an effective instrumentalist capacity. Thus, the cases in chapters 3–5 make clear that elite behavior is central to civic nationalist versus ethnic nationalist outcomes; however, it is also evident that instrumentalist success—whether ethnic or civic in orientation—is unlikely to prove effective without deeply rooted consciousness and self-definition (ethnic or civic) at the mass level.

### Ongoing Battles between Ethnic and Civic Nationalisms

In conclusion, the success or failure of nationalism in most postcolonial states is in large part determined by varying combinations of the underlying factors discussed in this chapter, including particular strategies and decisions by nationalist elites who assume power after independence. In each postcolonial context, whether nationalism develops in a more civic or more ethnic form has reflected particular precolonial historical experi-

ences, colonial inheritances, and the dynamics of unique social structures, along with leadership capacity and mass-level choice making. This makes it crucial to examine the particular combination of historical, psychological, political, social, and external elements that determine the direction of nationalism after independence in a given postcolonial setting.

Moreover, it can be observed from the cases in chapters 3–5 that each decade typically brings significant shifts in the struggle between civic and ethnic nationalism. Contrary to conventional wisdom (and primordialist expectations), ethnic nationalism can prove relatively fleeting, while poly-archical regimes by no means guarantee the enduring perpetuation of civic nationalism. The need to analyze the changing dynamics of these movements rather than presuming nationalism to occur as a fait accompli is emphasized in the volume's introduction and resonates in both the European and postcolonial contexts. As Connor has stressed, nationalist movements are continuing processes without a teleological endpoint, instead reflecting ebbs and flows.[20] At the same time, it is advisable not to overly generalize on the basis of the experience of South Asia or sub-Saharan Africa precisely because of the extent of changing patterns of success and failure of both civic nationalist and ethnic nationalist movements.

While Connor underlines the difficulty in pinpointing the time period of the rise or decline of nationalism,[21] Schraeder shows in his chapter that it is indeed possible to determine moments that spell the end of civic nationalism in postcolonial cases. He begins by identifying the ten-year period during which a pan-Somali nationalist ideology was consolidated among political elites (1970s) and then argues that Somali nationalism was marked by a key event—what Schraeder refers to as a "turning point"—in the decay of nationalist integrity, after which the cycle of violence spun out of control. He insightfully suggests that the study of such turning points represents one important way in which current research into the study of postcolonial nationalism may profitably lend new insight not only to contemporary cases but also more generally to our ability to understand when, why, and how nationalist movements succeed, become paralyzed, or recede from political life.

NOTES

1. Donald Rothchild, *Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Pressures and Incentives for Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1997), 42–43, 72–73;

and Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

2.  See chapter 1 of this volume.

3.  See also Rothchild, *Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa,* 40–42.

4.  Formerly Zaire.

5.  Rothchild, *Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa,* 31–36.

6.  Ibid., and see chapters 4 and 5 of this volume.

7.  J. R. Clammer, *The Cultural Politics of Pluralism in a Multiethnic Society* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998); Edward M. Dew, *The Difficult Flowering of Surinam: Ethnicity and Politics in a Plural Society* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978); and Thomas Hylland Eriksen*, Common Denominators: Ethnicity, Nation-Building and Compromise in Mauritius* (New York: Berg, 1998).

8.  Timothy D. Sisk, "Electoral System Choice in South Africa: Implications for Intergroup Moderation," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 1, no. 2 (summer 1995): 178–204.

9.  Cheryl Hendricks, "The National Question, Ethnicity, and the State: Some Insights on South Africa," in *The State and Democracy in Africa,* ed. Margaret C. Less and Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998).

10.  See chapter 1 of this volume.

11.  Raju G. C. Thomas, "Nations, States, and Secession," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 5, no. 4 (fall 1994): 55.

12.  Rothchild, *Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa,* 75–82.

13.  Joshua B. Forrest, *Subnationalism in Africa: Ethnicity, Alliances, and Politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004).

14.  See also Raju G. C. Thomas, "Nations, Nationalism and the State in South Asia: A Comparative Analysis" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Atlanta, September 2–5, 1999).

15.  Forrest, *Subnationalism in Africa.*

16.  See Walker Connor's collection of essays, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

17.  Stephen Ndegwa, "Citizenship and Ethnicity: An Examination of Two Transition Movements in Kenyan Politics," *American Political Science Review* 91, no. 3 (1997): 599–616.

18.  Walker Connor, "When Is a Nation?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12, no. 1 (January 1990): 92–103.

19.  See chapter 1 of this volume.

20.  Connor, "When Is a Nation?"

21.  Ibid.