Chapter II

Theories of Nation

Introduction

The attempt in this chapter is to carefully explore in a diachronic way the process of the emergence of nations and nationalism. The concepts of nation and nationality have a relatively recent history when they are compared with the course of the history of humanity. The observers of this particular field have raised major questions of ethical, philosophical, anthropological, political, historical and sociological importance with regard to the individual's identification with a nation.

In the first part of this chapter I shall discuss various theories and theoreticians of nation and analyse the ways in which the nation is being constructed in various countries. I would like to attempt a diachronic study of the construction of nationality and nation in Europe, since it is in Europe, the nation, as it is called today, was realised for the first time. (However, Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities* (1983) argues that unlike the popular conception it is in the Americas that the nation in its modern form was first established.) In the later part of the chapter I will discuss the national movements in Africa and Asia and examine the special features of these movements.
In the last part of the chapter I discuss the problem of the construction of nation (be it actual realisation or theoretical understanding). The question raised here is related to the individual subject's identification with the far-fetched system which is termed as nation. The choice of a nation, I will argue, is not always in the hands of individual subjects; on the other hand it has always been in the hands of a group of people who have power, be it physical power or economic, in every country. I arrive at such a conclusion evoking the political perspectives of crowd psychology presented by the psychoanalytical works of Lacan and others.

**Nation: the Concept**

Construction of nation-states is a recent phenomenon in the long history of human beings. It is a rather obvious fact that the idea of nation is bound by the individual's or a group's need for being identified as a specific and distinctive category.

According to Looby "The word *nation*, as has always been recognized, attempts to install the nation within nature as an organic phenomenon (the word *nation* is derived from the same root as nature and nativity)" (2). The word 'nation', according to the British cultural historian, Raymond Williams, has been in common use in English from the thirteenth century, originally with the primary sense of a racial group rather than a politically organized grouping. Since there is an obvious overlap between these senses, it is not easy to date the emergence of the predominant modern sense of a political formation, and the attempts in this regard have led on the one hand to
particularizing definitions of the nation-state and on the other hand to very complex arguments in the context of “nationalist” and “nationalism” (Williams 213). Williams has also commented elsewhere on the need to distinguish between the modern nation-state and the more ancient and nebulous condition of belonging:

‘Nation’ as a term is radically connected with ‘native’. We are born into relationships which are typically settled in a place. This form of primary and ‘placable’ bonding is of quite fundamental human and natural importance. Yet the jump from that to anything like the modern nation-state is entirely artificial. (Quoted in Brennan, 45)

A nation is called that if it satisfies some principal considerations such as: (1) a specified territory; (2) a certain minimum size; (3) some integration; and (4) a consciousness of itself as a nation. Out of these the first and fourth points are the key ones. The second consideration is deemed as part of the first in the true sense of the term and the fourth also includes the third in terms of the consciousness of the citizen.

There have been inquiries to find out answers for the much-repeated questions about nation and nationalism: What makes a person identify with a nation or a nationality? Is it true that a person who is usually termed as a certain national can have a different view altogether about his/her own national identity which differs drastically from the founding ideals? These are some of the fundamental questions asked repeatedly at some stage in studies of nations and nationalism.
Theories of Nation

The discussions of nation have a short history starting in Europe and slowly spreading to the other parts of the world. It is basically with the emergence of rational thinking that the people started thinking about the concept of nation seriously. Furthermore it can be seen that the emergence of the theories of nation has something in common with the historical emergence of modernist thought in Western Europe. The considerations for the concept of nation being modern work in three different levels. First; modern in the sense of being recent, i.e. since the French Revolution, and in the sense that the components of the nation were novel, i.e. part of the new age of modernity. Second; nations were the product of modernity, i.e. their elements were not only recent and novel, but also could only emerge, and had to emerge, through processes of 'modernisation', the rise of modern conditions and modernising policies. And third; nations and nationalisms were social constructs and cultural creations of modernity, designed for an age of revolutions and mass mobilisation, and central to the attempts to control these processes of rapid social change. These considerations include the notion that nations are not deeply rooted in history and that they are inevitable consequences of the revolutions that constitute modernity and will gradually wither away once the features and conditions that constitute modernity are achieved. Thus nationalism is embedded in modernity or in the processes of modernisation and the transition to a modern order. Hence when these processes are completed nationalism would disappear.
According to Anthony Smith these considerations stand as part of the larger paradigm of classical modernism.

**The Origins of Nationality and Nationalism: a Diachronic Study**

A discussion of the major theoreticians of nation and nationality is attempted here. Benedict Anderson, whose works are of primary importance in this regard, while discussing the origins of nation in various forms and across the continents, discusses the Creoles (to mean persons of pure European descent but born anywhere outside Europe) who went on to establish some kind of a forerunner to the modern day nations—he points out the examples of Brazil and the United States of America—and whom he considers the pioneers in ascertaining nationality. Anderson maintains that in Western Europe the eighteenth century marks the dawn of the age of nationalism. Interestingly it also happens to be an age of the decline of all religious modes of thought, even though the two phenomena are not directly related. The religious modes of thought can also be considered as preceding the idea of the nation, as was the case with the innumerable dynasties that were ruling these endless geographical areas, but they were by no means the only factors that paved the way to the rise of nationalism. Benedict Anderson goes on to emphasize that since World War II every successful revolution has defined itself in national terms, still grounded firmly in a territorial and social space inherited from the pre-Revolutionary past.

Horace B. Davis in his introduction to *Toward a Marxist Theory of Nationalism* (1978) indicates three ways in which nations are formed (8-9).
First, they may be formed from states (like in the case of the English state and the French State); second, they are formed in a struggle against foreign oppression (like many of the Asian and African countries who shook off European domination); and thirdly, they may primarily attain cultural solidarity and then political expression of that solidarity (the classical examples of Italy and Germany whose cultural unification preceded the political).

**Ernest Renan**

Ernest Renan's analysis constitutes the early idea of nation as an ethno-cultural formation in Europe. He is considered to be the first person to identify the active political commitment of the members of a nation. He starts with a contrast (which is to have a long history) between the fusion of 'races' in the nations of Western Europe, and the retention of ethnic distinctiveness in Eastern Europe. "A nation," he argued in the 1882 lecture delivered at the Sorbonne;

[...] is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other in present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. Man, Gentlemen, does not improvise. The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most
legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more – these are the essential conditions for being a people. One loves in proportion to the sacrifices to which one has consented, and in proportion to the ills that one has suffered. One loves the house that one has built and that one has handed down. (19)

For Renan the idea of 'nation' and 'nationality' depends a lot on the individual's identification with the past and his/her knowledge of the sacrifices that the ancestors have made. In a way, Renan gives more importance to the individual's acquired social identity than to the present-day socio-political equations that make the individual identify with the particular nation. We should note that Renan discusses the question, what is a nation, in the backdrop of the polemical debate between French, German, English and Italian scholars and politicians, in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, regarding the disputed title to Alsace and Lorraine, territories which Louis XIV had seized and which the Treaty of Frankfurt had returned to Germany in 1871 (Thom 23). Renan wishes to deny any naturalistic determinism of the boundaries of nations, be it dictated by language, geography, race or religion. Thus he vehemently believes that nations are made by human will. Renan's
belief can be seen in the light of the European enlightenment tradition and its conviction of the centrality of the human spirit.

It is easy to observe that France as a nation is easily one among many of the significant examples for Ernest Renan's ideas of nation. With their pride over the language, which is rooted in history, though it sometimes touches the limits of linguistic pomposity; the French are in constant association with the times of yore. This relationship with the past is rather political in its behaviour, and is hardened by the French Revolution and constant struggles to protect the national interests. It can also be seen that France as a nation believes in the glories of the great progenies of the country as well as the pronouncements of the nation and takes pride in following those proclamations. It is this sensible reaffirmation of the past that preserves France as a nation even in the contemporary times.

Renan's theory of nation has been criticised by several of the twentieth century critics (Horace B. Davis (6) for example). These critics are of the opinion that a nation is not just constituted by the components alone and that such a feeling of the component parts will not make a nation distinguishable from a tribe. These critics are also of the opinion that there should be a comprehensive theory (or a number of theories) to discuss the phenomena of nation.

Earnest Gellner

The next major theoretician of the nation I am discussing in this chapter is Earnest Gellner. There are of course other important thinkers who
attempted a study on the concept of nation during the long period between Renan and Gellner, but the peculiar trajectory Gellner followed in discussing the concept of nation places him directly in relation to Ernest Renan.

Ernest Gellner takes most of the arguments of Ernest Renan into consideration in the political and cultural perspective of the whole issue. His book *Nation and Nationalism* (1983) is regarded as one of the key texts which have historical reach and theoretical power. His definition of nation is basically a political one. The nation, according to Gellner, "is an abstraction, an allegory, a myth that does not correspond to a reality that can be scientifically defined" (cited in Anderson 15). He believes that 'nationalism' is "primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent" (cited in Hobsbawm 9). Gellner also stresses the element of artefact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations:

Nation as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent [...] political destiny, [is] a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing culture: that is a reality. (quoted in Hobsbawm, 10)

Gellner's book, *Nation and Nationalism* was criticised by many (such as Hobsbawm 10-11, and Davis 24) in its approach to the whole question of nationality and nationalism for looking at the process of building a nation from a perspective of modernization from above (The term 'above' here is used to mean that the view is essentially from the point of view of the centre of the
structure within which lies the power. The critics understand now that the
movements of modernisation of nations are mostly conceived and realised
through the governments or whoever is in power and they are never achieved
by the inherent and incessant capabilities for modernisation by the members,
that is the citizens themselves, who essentially constitute every nation.)
Hobsbawm points out that it is quite a difficult task to pay attention to the view
from below, since the slow and strenuous process of modernisation in a
society cannot be completely documented because of the lack of official
support and most of the time the visibility of such a process is very
insignificant and meagre. This criticism can be applied to most of the books
written on nation and nationalism.

Benedict Anderson

In an anthropological spirit Benedict Anderson defines nation as an
‘imagined political community’ (Imagined Communities: Reflections on the
Origin and Spread of Nationalism, 1983). The nation is ‘imagined’ according
to Anderson and it is both inherently limited and sovereign (6). Anderson
largely follows the arguments of Renan and the historian Hugh Seton-Watson.
(Hugh Seton-Watson distinguishes between the ‘old, continuous’ nations and
the deliberately created, new nations - he also claims that “a nation exists
when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to
form a nation, or behave as if they formed one” (Smith, Nationalism and
Modernism 173)). Anderson puts forward four suggestions on the nature and
being of a nation. He asserts that the nation is imagined because the
members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-
members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the
image of their communion. He says that it is imagined as *limited* because
even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human
beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. It is
*sovereign* because the concept was born in an age in which the
Enlightenment and the French Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of
the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realms. It is imagined as a
*community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that
may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal
comradeship (Anderson 6-7).

Anderson goes on to discuss how a nationality is derived, together with
the development of the print media and through a long lasting consciousness-
building exercise by the people in power. Deliberating on the concept of
'nation', he presents three paradoxes that have troubled the theorists of
nationalism:

(1) The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs.
their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists. (2) The
formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept — in
the modern world everyone can, should, will 'have' a nationality,
as he or she 'has' a gender — vs. the irremediable particularity of
its concrete manifestations, such that, by definition, 'Greek'
nationality is *sui generis*. (3) The 'political' power of nationalism
vs. their philosophical poverty. (Anderson 5)
Anderson believes that national identity or other words with multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. He also pleads for a historical understanding of the meanings of these words and how these meanings have changed over time, and why, in the present day, they command such profound emotional legitimacy.

However, he tries to argue that the creation of these artefacts towards the end of the eighteenth century was the spontaneous distillation of a complex 'crossing' of discrete historical forces; but that, once created, they became 'modular', capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations. He also shows why these cultural artefacts have aroused such deep attachments (4). Nevertheless, Anderson is of the opinion that the fact about the deep attachments lies in the cultural roots of nationalism.

**Eric J. Hobsbawm**

According to Hobsbawm, who follows and elaborates on the theories of nation by Ernest Renan and Ernest Gellner, the chief characteristic of the mode of classifying groups or human beings into a national identity is that,

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\text{[In spite of the claims of those who belong to it that are in some ways primary and fundamental for the social existence, or even the individual identification, of its members, no satisfactory criterion can be discovered for deciding which of the many human collectivities should be labelled in this way. (5)}
\]
Hobsbawm believes that the concept of nation is, historically speaking, a recent phenomenon. However, he also agrees that it has its roots in the eighteenth century. In approaching 'the national question', he thinks that it is more profitable to begin with the concept of "the nation" (i.e. with "nationalism") than with the reality it represents. For the "nation", as conceived by nationalism, can be recognized prospectively; the real "nation" can only be recognized a posteriori. His book Nations and Nationalism since 1780 (1990) pays attention to the changes and transformations of the concept, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century. Hobsbawm positions himself in a post-Marxist line of thinking and uses the term 'nationalism' to mean primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent (in this idea Hobsbawm follows Gellner). He adds that this principle also implies for example that the political duty of Ruritanians to the polity which encompasses and represents the Ruritanian nation, overrides all other public obligations, and in extreme cases (such as wars) all other obligations of whatever kind. However, he does not regard the 'nation' as a primary or an unchanging social entity. He says that the 'national question' is situated at the point of intersection of politics, technology and social transformation. Nations, according to him, are dual phenomena, which are constructed essentially from above, but which cannot be understood unless also analysed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist.
Anthony D. Smith

Anthony D. Smith in his book *Nationalism and Modernism* (1998) attempts to look at the discussions of nation and nationalism against the backdrop of the debates about modernity. Though Smith's earlier book *Theories of Nationalism* (1971) did try to discuss the issue of modernity, it is in *Nationalism and Modernism* that he elaborates these discussions to include the contemporary theories. He sees nationalism and the creation of the nation-states as the inclusive and liberating force which broke down the various localisms of region, dialect, custom and clan across the continents. He feels that nationalism's appeal was popular and democratic and that it attacked feudal practices and oppressive imperial tyrannies and proclaimed the sovereignty of the people and the right of all peoples to determine their own destinies, in states of their own (*Nationalism and Modernism* 1).

Smith discusses the intellectual foundations of linking nationalism with the classical modernist paradigm. He believes that there are four major streams of influences on the coherent modernist approach to the understanding of nations and nationalism. These are Marxism, crowd psychology, Weberian (Max Weber) and Durkheimian (Emile Dukheim) streams of philosophy. Marxism, especially when the founding fathers were writing, identified particular nationalist movements in strategic terms, judging their 'progressive' or 'regressive' character in relation to a given revolutionary situation. According to Smith, for Marx, Engels, Lenin and their followers, nations and nationalism were intrinsic to the development of the modern capitalist era. They were to be understood as manifestations of European
capitalism's need for new markets (Nationalism and Modernism 12). The second influence of the second tradition of crowd psychology is

a belief in the dislocating nature of modernity, its disorientation of the individual and its capacity for disrupting the stability of traditional sources of support. It is in these respects that the influence of certain kinds of earlier social psychology contributed to the overall picture of nations and nationalism presented by classical modernism (Nationalism and Modernism 13).

Smith believes that the third major influence on the modernist perspective of the debates of nations and nationalism is derived from the work of Max Weber. These were to become the central theme to classical modernism and its subsequent development.

These included the importance of political memories, the role of intellectuals in preserving the 'irreplaceable culture values' of a nation, and the importance of nation-states in the rise of the special character of the modern West (Nationalism and Modernism 13).

It is apparent that Weber's influence on the discussions of nation and nationalism is in the introduction of the role of power, and especially state power, in the definition of the nation and the explanation of nationalism. Thus the Weberian influence makes it obvious that the discussions of nation have to take into account the different versions of political modernism.
Emile Durkheim's emphasis on community is the third influence on the classical modernist paradigm according to Smith. Durkheim believed that ethnicity and nationalism have a timeless quality about it.

This is especially true of his analysis of religion as the core of moral community and his consequent belief that 'there is something eternal in religion', whatever the changes in its symbolism, because all societies feel the need to reaffirm and renew themselves periodically through collective rites and ceremonies (Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* 15).

Basically what Durkheim wants the classical modernists to project is the view that modern society requires a new principle of cohesion and reintegration, after all the dislocations and strains of modernisation, and according to Smith, this was to be found in the idea of the nation and the mobilising power of nationalism (*Nationalism and Modernism* 16).

**Reasons for the Emergence of a Nation**

There might be several inspiring factors in the emergence of every nation. Most of these reasons are politically oriented and they differ from one nation to another considerably. While sketching the history of the concept of nation and nationality, Benedict Anderson asserts that in Western Europe the eighteenth century marks the dawn of the age of nationalism (3).

Interestingly, it also happens to be an age of the decline of all religious modes of thought, even though the two events are not immediately related. The religious modes of thought can also be considered as preceding the idea of
the nation, as was the case with the innumerable dynasties that were ruling these endless geographical areas. But, to say that these were the only factors that paved the way to the rise of nationalism would be untenable. In the same way similar language, common geography and shared history are considered the deciding factors in the emergence of nations. There are instances when external forces (like the colonial powers and their rule in an alien land) inspired the national feelings.

While we may insist on consciousness or preference as the basis of nationhood we cannot at the same time limit the complex and multiple ways in which human beings define and redefine themselves as members of groups, to a single option: the choice of belonging to a 'nation' or 'nationality'. Definitions of objective or subjective nationhood lead to a stalemate when we consider present-day nations. The consciousness-preference theory is amplified using the devotion of the individuals as the reference point. 'Devotion' has been presented as a conscious devotion of those in voluntary service in the army etc. 'By preference' is a factor taken for granted in all the discussions of the nation.

Religion

A common religion was one of the main elements determining the rise and character of nations in the Old World – Calvinism helped to establish the Netherlands, Catholicism to form the nations of Spain, Poland and Ireland. However, religion is considered by some theoreticians of nationalism (Smith, Nationalism and Modernism 153 for example), as a force that can undermine
the comprehensive civil sense and thus as a force which undermines the unity of the nation.

Another classical example for religion paving the way for nation formation is Israel. Through centuries the people of Israel were scattered all over Europe, but they always thought they would go back to the Promised Land according to the wishes of Moses. In fact the Jewish community, before it reached Israel soon after the Second World War, was never in unison with the place they used to live in. But, immediately after they reached Israel they could not think in terms of a long history since the history of a person, though s/he was now a citizen of Israel, was not the same as another one. Fifty odd years later the case must have changed, and now their approach to the nation would be quite different from what it was when it was formed.

Geography

Another element was the people’s rootsdness in a common territory – an island becoming a nation like in the case of England and a river deciding the national character of Egypt. Dormant nationalities were reawakened to national life in the nineteenth century by the revived consciousness of their attachment to a historical soil, which their ancestors had tilled for many generations and in which they had been buried from time immemorial. If frontiers may affect the constitution, and thereby the internal life of a nation, they may affect the character it projects. It is an understanding common to the people of a specific region that paves the way for geographical interventions in the formation of a nation. The effects of climate (which
includes more elements than simple temperature, such as modes of cultivation, lifestyles like clothing, and many a time even the food habits) not only throw light on the past development of a nation, they also have a practical and civic importance in the immediate present.

**Language**

A common language was considered a precondition for a nation's realisation. It is true that language is often associated with nationality, but it is nevertheless not a common combination. It is assumed that people will choose to be united with others speaking the same language. Words are not only words, but also vehicles of associations. And the bond of common words and their common association can not only be a link between peoples in the present, but may even suggest the transmission to those peoples of some common substance of thought from a dim and forgotten past in which they once lived together.

However, most large nations and many medium and small ones have more than one language. Switzerland has five languages; India has more than a hundred distinctive languages. Even though language difference is not necessarily decisive, it can give rise to linguism as the basis of primordial conflicts. Hobsbawm dismisses the new linguistic nationalism centred on the vernacular by saying that it is a vested interest of the 'lesser examination-passing classes' (111).
Common History

In the case of freedom struggle, it is believed that the inspiration is always from the history of the country. It is through the glory of the past that the people identify themselves with the geographic territory that they are in. It is the binding force that primarily pushes the people who try to find out a way to get rid of the autocrat or an imperialist power. This is the reason why the constituted nation primarily becomes an emotional entity than the constraints of the topographical boundaries. It is the same with a person who tries to locate the national culture. He/she will have to look into the roots of the culture and the influence. Giving an insight into the people's struggle against imperialism and national culture's involvement in it Frantz Fanon writes,

[...] nothing to be ashamed of in the past, but rather dignity, glory and solemnity. The claim to a national culture in the past does not only rehabilitate that nation and serve as a justification for the hope of a future national culture [...] culture, extracted from the past to be displayed in all its splendour, is not necessarily that of his own country. (169)

Others

In the case of newly formed African nations it was the former territorial borders laid down by the European rulers that decided the nation rather than the linguistic unity or the history. Another way of forming a nation has been the economic determination of the constituents. This can be termed as the nations of the Far East (Cambodia and Philippines for example). It is
considered to be a weak factor in influencing nation-building because the production and market value depend a lot on the economic powers who decide the market's intricacies. It is the same case with a feudal society which was considered as a poor material for nation-building because it was so decentralised. There are other factors which determine the construction of nation like the race, literature, blood loyalty, immortal facticity, thought, custom, education and the like. An attempt to discuss these factors will not be appropriate in the scheme of things in this chapter.

Problems in Approaching the Construction of Nation

Nations do not make states and nationalism; rather it is the other way round. But sadly enough the approach has always been top down in academic and social debates on nationalism. The view from below is to look at the persons who are the objects of action and propaganda of governments and the spokespersons and activists of nationalist movements. Their view, however, is very difficult to discover. One usually tends to look at a modern nation from what it is today and trace back its origin to the economic, political and social conditions that are located in the past. In the case of a citizen, it is always difficult to pinpoint what is in his/her mind, so the tracing back fails because the national identification is not always a concrete one. The national identification is a temporary and transitory one in the case of a subject in modern nation states. But it is never the mind-set of the subject that decides nationality. On the other hand, it is the forces of power that decide nationality. Hence, nationality and nation are thrust upon the individual subject. A
personal concern or individual preference is rather an illusion in these circumstances. A striking example of such a preference not being taken into account can be seen in the separation of Germany into two after the Second World War.

Another way of defining nationality is by taking into account the majority of the people in a country. The problem with such a rationale is that a nation cannot be decided by the majority. This kind of an argument is on an unstable ground, since it is not the number of the subjects who believe in a nation that matters. Instead, it should be the mindset of the individuals, their solidarity and unity that matter. The suggestion here is not of an extreme anti-national one. (The reference here is to the so-called 'anti-national' movements in countries like Sri Lanka and Tibet; the argument of the 'separatists' of these countries is that they have nothing in common with the 'nation' they are in). Rather, the question is that of associating oneself with a majority. However, submitting oneself to a nationality without identifying with the country involves a lot of compromise. In the case of most countries, a person from one corner has nothing in common with a person from another corner—the practices of day-to-day life are different, the religious practices are different, the languages are different. Usually nation-states fail to take these things into consideration. However, nation as a constructive category (as a philosophical concept) has to take these realities into consideration. The subordination of all other divisions to the concept of nation is due to the amplification of the consciousness-preference theory. However, relationships within a religion (say caste equations and gender equations), institutions
imparting knowledge (family, school), relationships within an economic system (working class, management class) are also constitutive of national identity. The institutions within a state have been divided into explicitly political/repressive and ideological institutions. The Police belongs to the former, but even such an apparatus, in Althusser's opinion, may tend to function through ideology (141). That is, at times, even the preference-theory seeks an ideological mode of functioning just as ideological institutions, in the last instance, have had resort to violent measures. What one calls state power is usually attached to the police, army, and prison. But even these political apparatuses of the state sometimes tend to work through ideology. In other words, it is a case which cannot be put in a watertight compartment; ideological and repressive methods often overlap.

**Marxist Tradition and the National Question**

Let us look briefly at the Marxist approach to 'nation' and 'nationalism'. According to the early Marxian ideals, instead of pinning faith on nationalism, the nations of the world should aspire to a socialist whole. Subsequently Marxism has changed into several interpretations of the same ideal. "Marxists profess to be internationalists, and yet everywhere we find Marxists acting as nationalists" (Davis 3). This can be termed as a contradiction at the outset, but probing further one might find a significant attempt to fit nationalism into Marxist theory. Marxists see nationalism as an important movement which is primarily political and cultural. Though Marxist theory is interested predominantly in the conflict of class and economic organisation, the part
played by nationalist motives also had a major role in twentieth century arguments.

**Early Ideals**

For Marx and Engels nationalism was intrinsic to the development of the modern capitalist era. They understood nationalism as the manifestation of European capitalism's need for larger territorial markets and trading groups. They understood nationalism as a fight to attain the interests of the workers as a class. *The Communist Manifesto* discusses how with the growing centralization and integration of industry the local struggles of the workers give way gradually to national struggles. Marx and Engels were not nationalists and they were not making a claim that the proletariats had adopted nationalism. Workers, according to them, were not fighting for the interests of the national bourgeoisie against other national bourgeoisies, they were fighting for their interests as a class, on a national scale (Davis 30).

Lenin and Stalin in their writing had not made any distinction between nation and national identity. Engels made such a distinction though with little impact. It is later in the history of Marxist thinking with the increasing interest in the language groupings in the multilingual states in Eastern Europe that the distinction between nation and nationality came into being.

**V. I. Lenin**

As maintained by a major stream within the Marxist theories, a detailed discussion of which can be seen in Lenin's essay "The Discussion of Self
Determination”, national ideology (‘the national question’ as they would call it) can be used to cover up imperialist policies (243). Adhering to the claims of Engels, Lenin argues that the course of historical development has swallowed up a number of small and non-viable nations which had been determined by the “language and sympathies” of the population. For Engels these frontiers are “natural”. Quoting Otto Bauer in support of his thoughts, Lenin argues that it is impossible to find a nation where all the heterogeneous masses of people enjoy the blessings of the national culture. For he believes that it is impossible to end national (or any other political) oppression under capitalism. Thus he puts forth the idea of a democratically organised state and army which can put an end to national oppression.

**Joseph Stalin**

Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National and the Colonial Question*, 1912) would call the nation a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture. His argument comes into being in relation to his continuing debate with the other stream of Marxism (Trotsky and his followers) which still felt that there should be a propagation of the ideal of a single socialist nation.

**Louise Althusser**

Althusser provides valuable insights into the distinction between and the functioning of the political constituents of state. 'State' in Althusser's
discussions should be understood as the only legitimate political organisation and the dominant vehicle of collective identity within a nation. His analysis of the state apparatuses should be seen in the light of the Marxist theory of the state. He follows the *Communist Manifesto* and *Eighteenth Brumaire* to a large extent to formulate his ideas of the apparatuses within the system of the state.

Althusser discusses the ideological apparatuses (like the school) and the repressive apparatuses (police for example) within the state in his essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an investigation)" (*Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* 1970). He argues that the repressive State Apparatus, in the perception of the Marxist tradition, belongs entirely to the public domain and it functions rather 'violently' *(by repression)*. On the other hand the ideological apparatuses function 'by ideology' in the private domain. The Police, the courts, the prisons, and the army belong to the former, but even such an apparatuses, in Althusser's opinion, may tend to function through ideology. That is, at times, even the repressive apparatuses seek an ideological mode of functioning just as ideological institutions, in the last instance, have had resort to violent measures. In other words, it is a case which cannot be put in a watertight compartment, but which overlaps and incorporates ideological and repressive methods (131-141).

**Lacan and “subjectivity”**

Another interesting way of approaching the question of identity is by examining the relationship between the subject and the nation. It becomes a
question of power relations as well as a question of political philosophy when one goes into the intricacies of the nature of this relationship. There is an exceedingly important equation between the subject (which is in the periphery) and the nation (which is believed to be the centre of all the power equations). There is no straightforward parameter to gauge this relationship so that it can be dismissed by declaring that it is a kind of love-hate relationship. The ontological problem here is that the subject cannot exist without the existence of the power structure (i.e. the nation) and at the same time the nation also cannot exist without the existence of the subject. If one is not reducing the socio-political conception of subjectivity to individuality, then the subjectivity opens up a road to the understanding of the objective. A political enquiry into the problem will throw light on the impossibility of identity constructions, since a full identity is a myth and one is always on the look out for constructing newer identities. Thus the synthesis with the object of identification becomes elusive.

The way to crack this difficult puzzle is by introducing the concept of "subjectivity". Lacan develops this concept from the psychological idea of split which is in an embryonic form in Freud (Freud's concept is that the subject of psychoanalysis is the subject as structured around a radical split or rather the internal division of the psyche). Lacan develops it in terms of the split between the human subject and the conscious ego. His theory becomes relevant for contemporary socio-political analysis because of his vision of the human subject. Nevertheless, his 'subject' cannot be taken for the 'individuel'
or the 'conscious subject' in everyday discourse. Lacan argues that there is always a split in subjective positions.

The Lacanian concept of the subject moves around with his psychological formulation of the 'mirror stage',

[...] where the fragmentation experienced by the infant is transformed into an affirmation of its bodily unity through the assumption of its image in the mirror. This is how the infant acquires its first sense of unity and identity [...] the infant appears jubilant due to its success in integrating its fragmentation into an imaginary totality and unity. Later on, however, the joyous affirmation of imaginary unity is replaced by a resurfacing of the distance between this new unity and the continuing fragmentary, uncoordinated and lacking character of the infant's lived experience of its real body. (Stavrakakis 17)

It is apparent that the subject assumes different subject positions in the socio-political realm, and the subject always confronts a fragmented, uncoordinated sense resulting in alienation. If we stretch the argument to the question of national identity, we may find that the identification with the nation is just one of the several subject positions that the subject borrows. In his book *Lacan and the Political* (1999) Stavrakakis discusses the Lacanian concept of symbolic and imaginary codes and its relevance to contemporary social and political phenomena. He says:

If the imaginary, the field of specular images, of spatial unities and totalised representations, is always built on an illusion which
is ultimately alienating for the child, his or her only recourse is to turn to the symbolic level, seeking in language a means to acquire a stable identity. (20)

As far as the subjective identity is concerned, it is a kind of constitutive alienation that is taking place. As a consequence the fullness of identity that the subject is seeking is impossible both in the imaginary and in the symbolic level. Since the imaginary representation of ourselves is incapable of providing us with a stable identity, it is thus far an abstraction: of symbolic identification with a powerful one, which is different from imaginary (Guattari would call these two in terms of groups: "subject group" and "dependent group" (36)). However, the articulation/assimilation of the subject to the imaginary and the symbolic does not exist separately.

The process of identification is constitutive of socio-political life. The identification as well as alienation from the power is found at the very root of the formation of subjectivity. In that sense it is a certain subordination, an exercise of power, that constitutes the condition of possibility for the constitution of subjectivity. And it should be further noted that there couldn’t be a subjectivity without subordination. Lacan argues that the subordination cannot be reduced to the physical presence but can be traced in the symbolic power which is based on the recognition of difference, and makes possible the institution of a certain order: the imaginary destruction of the other can be replaced by a coexistence by pact. This coexistence is never naturally-given but is an effect of symbolic power.
Félix Guattari, in his lengthy study of the relationship between a group and an individual, which runs through breaking the barriers of disciplines unique to the French intelligentsia, suggests that one feels the need to return to national or regional distinctness (local) only when one is most universal and that the two phenomena are complementary though at the outset they might seem conflicting with each other (36). In an attempt to codify the formation of group and the individual's role in such a group he also brings in the Lacanian concept of imaginary and symbolic.

I say that the subject group is articulated like a language and links itself to the sum of historical discourse, whereas the dependent group is structured according to a spatial mode, and has a specifically imaginary mode of representation, that it is the medium of the group phantasies; in reality, however, we are dealing not so much with two sorts of group, but two functions, and the two may even coincide [...] One might perhaps say that the dependent group permanently represents a potential sub-whole of the subject group, and, as a counterpoint to the formulations of Lacan, one might add that only a partial, detached institutional object can provide it with a basis. (36-37)

Conclusion

The nation, according to the studies mentioned so far, can be termed primarily as a changing social entity. It belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period. It is a social entity insofar as it relates to a certain
kind of modern territorial state. Nations and their associated phenomena must also be analysed in terms of political, technical, administrative, economic and other conditions and requirements. Nations exist not only as functions of a particular kind of territorial state or the aspiration to establish one but also in the context of a particular stage of technological and economic development. Hobsbawm (whom we have discussed earlier in this chapter) proposes three considerations to be kept in mind when investigating the concept of nation.

Borrowing largely from Miroslav Hroch's ideas, he says:

First, official ideologies of states and movements are not guides to what [ideas, opinions or feelings that make the choice] is in the minds of even the most loyal citizens or supporters.

Second, and more specifically, we cannot assume that for most people national identification—when it exists—excludes or is always or even superior to, the remainder of the set of identifications which constitute the social being. In fact, it is always combined with identifications of another kind, even when it is felt to be superior to them. Thirdly, national identification and what it is believed to imply, can change and shift in time, even in the course of quite short periods. In my judgement this is the area of national studies in which thinking and research are most urgently needed today. (Hobsbawm 11)

"National consciousness" develops unevenly among the social groupings and regions of a country, this and its reasons have in the past been notably neglected. Whatever the nature of the social groups first captured by 'national
consciousness' the popular masses—workers, peasants, servants—are the last to be affected by it.

In the last few decades, inquiries into the concept and development of the nation have tended to concentrate on the postcolonial status of the present day nations. The concept of nation, thus, takes into consideration the individual subject in relation to its community; its past history and possible future. In the case of an imperial system the subject, though living in the home country, does not have any living access to the far-flung system that makes the individual's subjective existence possible.

In the context of Africa's struggle for freedom, Fanon's (whose ideas on national culture have been discussed earlier in the chapter) assertion not only concentrates on the question of national culture, it also postulates the individual's identification with a nation. He says that the truths of the nation are in the first place its realities. The reality, in turn, is correlated to the individual subjects' longing for representation. An imperialist power, as well as a government which acts as a totalitarian regime, never cares for the individual subject's representations.

The basic difference in the concept of nation between Europe and Africa and Asia, other than the temporal difference of their origins, is that the countries of Africa and Asia had to fight against an external force (colonial powers) to attain national freedom. Thus the Asian and African national movements are almost always combined with the freedom struggle. Furthermore a thorough scrutiny of the national movements in Africa and Asia introduces the question of the postcolonial status of nations.
While discussing the relationship between mass armies and democracy, Robert Dahl, a political scientist, relates the problem of national identification to individual identity. He puts it thus: "[...] to see oneself as a member of a nation, a privilege for which one was expected to make sacrifices, could also justify one in making a more expansive claim, including a fair share in governing" (quoted in Held, "The Development of the Modern State" 96). Asserting the individual subject's inability to choose, David Held confirms that the conditions involved in the creation of the modern state were also often the conditions which generated nationalism and that it has been closely linked to the administrative unification of the state ("The Development of the Modern State" 97). As far as the national identities are concerned it was a result of both a struggle for membership in the new political communities, and a struggle by elites and governments to create a new identity to legitimise the actions of the state. He adds, that the construction of national identity has been part of an attempt to bind people together within the framework of a delimited territory in order to gain or enhance state power ("The Development of the Modern State" 97). However, the national identity can be perceived as a construct or a phenomenon primarily related to the individual citizen and his/her longing to become a part of a larger group. In the thesis the national identity is understood as a construct primarily of the people rather than as the ideological manifestation of the state power as identified by David Held.

The question of conceiving a nationality/national identity is related to the question of the construction of nation in very many ways. In all these
various studies and predominantly in the construction of nationalities the thrust is basically and generally not on the individual subject or the subject's conscious choice of identification, on the other hand they predominantly and categorically revolve around the powerful in a given geographical terrain, be it a case of an autocrat or a military ruler or a dominant language or culture which out-powers every other voice.

Concluding the chapter I would attempt to classify nationalism of the modern day into four categories on the lines of Horace B. Davis and propose a reminiscent way of discussing the whole problem of the relationship between the individual and a nation. The classification attempted here is far from exhaustive and contains overlapping categories.

1. The nationalism of people with a long experience of concurrent development of state power and national consciousness, with citizenship determining nationality (Western Europe);

2. The nationalism of countries without a political experience of long duration but with a common language and a common self-image [Italy and Germany]:

3. The nationalism of countries such as those of southeastern Europe [Bulgaria], without a common political experience of long duration and often without an ethnically homogeneous territory, in which the religion of historical association is usually an important determinant of national consciousness; and
4. The nationalism of anticolonialism and of the drive for modernity generally associated with the Third World [Argentina, India] but manifest also in southeastern Europe. (Davis 5)