**Tamar Grdzelidze**
*Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum)*

## Survey of Studies on Nationalism with a Particular View on Religion[1]

Nationalism is a very broad subject, and the semantics related to it are very rich too. Numerous theories and studies on nationalism always have something interesting to offer to studies on religion. This brief survey on nationalism reveals the changing patterns by which scholars try to define it anew, although with no intention of giving a comprehensive interpretation or rejecting previous findings altogether. Studies on nationalism prove that it has many facets and that its conflicting perspectives may not be mutually exclusive.

Important note: studies on nationalism take for granted a distinction between border and boundary[2]. If "national borders" mean the borders of a land (province, kingdom, principality, empire, state) inhabited by a group of people under the leadership (of a governor, king, prince, emperor, representational government), ethnicity/group-related boundaries, on the other hand, are the elusive property of culture and identity.

Paul Lawrence identifies three directions: nationalism as referring to an abstract ideology according to which humanity is divided into nations; nationalism as a political doctrine of self-governing nations; nationalism as signifying "the sentiment felt by many people of belonging to a particular

1 Nationalism as a secular religion in the West is seen as a result of de-colonization and the creation of nation-states. This survey excludes studies on nationalism following decolonization because studies on colonization are always contextual that has much to offer to a particular case but perhaps, less so to general trends of religious nationalism.

2 "Boundary" is one of the most frequently used terms in this research. It emerged first in anthropology, as an analytical term, to categorize or catalogue ethnic groups according to their external characteristics, and then found its way into the social sciences, most notably into politics (and geopolitics). It is a marker defining insiders and outsiders but each context accommodates the concept in its own way. For example, ethnic boundaries and national boundaries may have different political adaptations that can be manipulated by the nationalistic principle.

nation".[3] Theories of nationalism relevant to discussions of religion, or more specifically to Orthodox Church, show a particular affinity with the third trend. In distinctive political and cultural contexts Orthodox nationalism has different expressions but it always carries a sentiment of belonging to a particular group: ethnos/"nation". Even so, many qualities proposed by various studies of nationalism find expression in the multiple forms of nationalism identified within the Orthodox Church. For example, features as different as referring nationalism to nineteenth-century European politics, or to ethnic heritage, or to cultural reality, or to myth, are all identified with expressions of nationalism in the local Orthodox Churches in different historical contexts.

The aim of this survey is to demonstrate nationalism's changing character so that it may help in discerning "Orthodox nationalism(s)" as a varying phenomenon. This is needed in order to challenge the standard view on nationalism in the Orthodox Church, that is, to see it primarily through the prism of the *ethnophyletism* developed in the nation states of the traditional autocephalous Churches as a consequence of national-liberation movement.

The term "nation", like "nationalism", is not an easy one either. In the last two hundred years it has been overloaded with post-enlightenment, modernist, postmodernist and globalist philosophies. In this survey "nation" or *"ethnos"* designates a group of people living within the same borders, sharing the same covenant with the political and social arrangement, and having in common

3 Paul Lawrence, *Nationalism, History and Theory* (Edinburgh: Pearson-Longman, 2005), 3. It is remarkable to note that "those seeking to characterise and dissect the phenomenon of nationalism itself have often come to startingly divergent conclusions. It has been argued, for example, that nationalism is best explained by reference to politics; that it is in fact, primarily "politics in new style" […] invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century" (Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 4, reprint, Blackwell, 1993, 9). Other explanations, by contrast, have focused on the importance of cultural factors in any analysis of nationalism, mantaining that "the ethnic roots of the past hold the key to understanding contemporary nationalism" (Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, London: Duckworth, 1983). Still others have stressed the salience of economics, claiming that new nationalisms are always "a forced by-product of the grotesquely uneven nature of capitalist development" (Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain. Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: NLB, 1977). Some authors have omitted human agency altogether, providing purely structural accounts which have stressed the function of nationalism as "an essential component of modernisation" (Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1983). Others have emphasized the importance of considerations of psychology (viewing nationalism as "an outgrowth of the social instinct) and even of geography, arguing that "in a thousand ways, the land in which we live forms and moulds us" (W. B. Phillsbury, *The Psychology of Nationalism and Internationalism* [New York and London: Appleton and Co., 1919], 57). "Nationalism has been variously categorized in the titles of works devoted to it as both "primordial" and "banal", both a "myth" and a "reality", both "imagined" and "invented", at once "the tragedy of a people" and the "god of modernity" " (Lawrence [pp. 7-8] refers to a long list of authors dealing with the listed characteristics, such as Edward Shils, Michael Billig, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson, Louis Snyder, and Josep Llobera).

one (or more) language/s and social customs (family, kinship etc.). Historically, some of these sentiments gave rise to religious nationalism, in which belonging to a particular territory is significant (and always has been so). Under various circumstances, this "territorial belonging" has also been translated into belonging to extra-territorial borders. There are two phenomena proving the latter: the so called diaspora that has become common to all autocephalous Churches; and the shifting of its religious-cultural boundaries far beyond its geographical borders by the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. In other words, post-Soviet Russian diaspora is marked by a wide-ranging geopolitical ambition.

## Studies on Nationalism

A brief and limited survey of different trends on nationalism is offered here to draw on relevant approaches in studies on nationalism in late modernity with regard religion, namely, "Orthodoxy".

"Modernism has provided a diverse but highly influential theory base" of nationalism, writes Paul Lawrence.[4] Already by the end of 1960s the pioneering works of Karl W. Deutsch,[5] Elie Kedouri,[6] and Ernest Gellner[7] viewed nations and nationalism as by-products of modernity. Ernest Gellner in his writings places nationalism strictly within modernity and views it as a predominantly political principle. The emergence of nationalism, he says, is linked to a transition to the industrial/scientific world. "Homogeneity of culture determines political boundaries in the modern, industrial/scientific world, and the transition to Industrial is also the transition to a world in which high literacy and education become the pervasive culture of society as a whole."[8] Gellner thus points to industrialization and compulsory education as major contributors to nationalism. He says at the same time that not all the social phenomena in the construction of nationalism are modern, but rather culture and power are perennial […] Cultures, however, are persistent and unstable at the same time, and this process of fluctuation has its own trajectory which is unknown to us.[9]

4 Lawrence, 160.

5 Karl W. Deutsch, *Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966).

6 Elie Kedouri, *Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960).

7 Eric Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Introduction by John Breuilly (Cornell University Press, 2009).

8 Ibid., 44.

9 Ibid., 42-3.

Within the same decades distinct approaches to nationalism were emerging. Already in the 1970s and 1980s, Walker Connor argued for the resilience of seminal roots and the strength of nationalism in ethnic conflict. The key concepts behind this argument were "the loyalty to a nation deprived of its own strength and the loyalty to an ethnic group embodied in a specific state, particularly when the latter is conceived as a "nation-state".[10] According to Connor, and to those who followed his footsteps, the central element in the development of nationalism is ethnicity understood as "commonality supported by a myth of common ancestry".[11] In his analysis, Daniele Conversi notes on the importance of the subjective and psychological quality of perception in the work of Walker Connor.[12] From the study of religious nationalism with regard to the autocephalous Orthodox Churches, the socio-anthropological reality, and even more, such primordial elements as language, customs of doing things in a particular way, along with a mythical self-perception, self-definition (descent, allotment etc.), are undeniably intrinsic to nationalism in Orthodox culture.

In one of his writings, Connor raises a question on why modern states and nations decide to turn the principle of nationality into the ultimate principle of legitimacy. One of the reasons, he thinks, is the interchangeable use of "nation" and "state".[13] He claims that the dominant belief in the last two hundred years

10 Daniele Conversi, "Conceptualizing nationalism: An Introduction to Walker Connor's work." In *Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism*, ed. Daniele Conversi, 1-23 (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), at 2.

11 Ibid., 2.

12 Connor's direction challenges Gellner and others: Conversi, "Conceptualizing nationalism", 3. "Both Connor and Gellner regard nationalism as an organizing and a legitimizing principle […] according to Gellner, nationalism is the principle that 'the rulers should belong to the same ethnic (i.e. national) group as the ruled'" (Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell/Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983], 1). Both agree that the nation is a product of modernity but Gellner acknowledges industrialization as the catalyst of nation-formation, while Connor sees the core element as a mass, in contrast to an élite, that materializes only with late modernity, with compulsory education and conscript armies (Walker Connor, "Nationalism, Boundaries and Violence", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 28:3 (1999], 553-84; Conversi, "Conceptualizing nationalism", 7. The nation is a self-differentiating ethnic group; it is marked by continuity between ethnic and national dimensions, and is a result of self-awareness, of self-defining, thus relying on perception and psychology: "the subjective experience of self-awareness brings the nation into being" (Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 42. Accordingly, the modernist construction of a nation-state "is au fond an ethnic state". Connor argues that all nationalisms are ethnically predicated but not all ethnicities are nations.

13 As already mentioned, according to Connor, "national is reserved for ethnic groups who have achieved group self-awareness". Walker Connor, "Nationalism and Political Illegitimacy." In Conversi, ed., 24-49, at 25.

has been that any people has the right to be a nation and form a state. Therefore "it presumes that nationhood (national consciousness) constitutes the ultimate standard for gauging political legitimacy".[14] In fact, for Connor, state legitimacy makes sense as far as it embraces national self-determination. So "national self-determination, as a variant of popular sovereignty and its most infectious form, represents an assertive theory of state-legitimacy".[15]

In his book *Religion and Power: No Logos without Mythos*, David Martin finds this nexus unavoidable: since religious images as "condensed images" easily translate into political scripts, there is "the close relationship between nationalism, religion and politics in their participation in myth".[16]

That myths feed nationalism as the legacy of an earlier process of nationhood-making has also been pointed out by Adrian Hastings.[17] When this mythology enters into church discourse, it begets pseudo-patriotism. The latter has shown itself to have a great deal of potential to be transformed into violent nationalism. Then Hastings continues reflecting on nationalism's latent presence which easily flares up in times of war and continuous aggression so that "it can become overwhelmingly and irrationally strong, to subside in altered circumstances almost as quickly as it has been inflamed".[18]

In the 1990s, the rupture with the past for the sake of modernist theory received substantial criticism for being too simplistic. Anthony Smith is the foremost advocate of the approach known as "ethno-symbolism" that connotes "scholars who aim to uncover the *symbolic legacy* of pre-modern ethnic identities for today's nations."[19] Modern nations (and hence nationalism) cannot be fully understood without a consideration of the pre-existing ethnic cores from which they were formed, and the myth-symbol complexes by which

14 Connor, 26.

15 Ibid., 41.

16 David Martin, *Religion and Power: No Logos without Mythos,* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 173. "Christianity sets an ambiguous boundary between God and Caesar, but the repertoire of religious images ignores our imagined boundaries. When Israelites created they had no boundary between religion and politics" (ibid., 175). Martin here adduces the example of the Israelites, but the same is true of the Roman Empire, for both the religious and the political were simultaneously agencies of the emperor.

17 Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*, The 1996 Wiles Lectures given at the Queen's University of Belfast (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 99. "Churches are not only still intensely nationalist, they also continue to reinforce myths and practices which produce the alienation between communities upon which rival nationalisms inevitably feed" (ibid., 206).

18 Hastings, 32.

19 Lawrence, 161. Ethnosymbolists part from modernists on the points of symbolic resources, *la long durée.* Introduced by French *Annales* historians, "long duration", is an approach to studying long-term conditions and gradual change in history.

these *ethnies* were sustained. In postmodern times of political and cultural fragmentation, however, it has been difficult to reconcile all the approaches into one theory. Ethno-symbolism seeks the formation of nations through a long-term examination, as Umut Ozkirimli notes, "in *la longue durée*, […] for the emergence of today's nations cannot be understood properly without taking their ethnic forebears into account."[20]

Anthony Smith, in his criticism of both "modernist" and "neo-perennialist theories on nationalism, proposes some conceptual tools under the framework of ethno-symbolism. In opposition to the postmodern critique, however, he claims to be in agreement with modernists "on the importance of conceiving of nations as "real" sociological communities".[21] He says that it is tempting to consider nations as "discursive formations", products of states but the emotional loyalty of members of the same group to their shared commonality shows forth:

Nations for both modernists and ethno-symbolists are conceived of as historical communities, embedded in specific historical and geo-cultural contexts. "As a result, their origins, character and trajectories are amenable to causal historical analysis; and the same is true of nationalist ideologies and movements. This is […] to see them (nations – T. G.) as forms of community and movement, located in specific contexts of space and time, with their members viewing them as resources and vehicles for their own interests and visions, and as intimate social bonds and cultural solidarities".[22]

In his approach Smith is also critical of the importance given by modernists to material factors, which results in "a predominantly, although never exclusively, instrumental analysis".[23] Although, "material resources" as well as "power differentials" shape those groups, they do not play a definitive role in that shaping. Ethno-symbolists, on the contrary, analyse these groups and their self-perception with the help of "their constituent symbolic resources, that is, the traditions, memories, values, myths and symbols that compose the accumulated heritage of cultural units of population".[24] So, in contrast to the modernists" emphasis on material domains, ethno-symbolists are concerned more with the symbolic resources, and consider "ethnic identities and

20 Umut Ozkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, Foreword by Fred Halliday (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 168.

21 Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnosymbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (London: Routledge, 2009), 13.

22 Smith, 14.

23 Ibid., 15.

24 Ibid., 16.

communities as crucial for the formation and the persistence of nations".[25]

In the writings of Anthony Smith, who acknowledges a historical continuity between ethnic and national identity, ethnic boundaries are explained by the importance of myths, which have "an exceptional capacity to convey a sense of belonging and continuity through successive generations".[26] This continuity, according to the studies on ethno-symbolism, are shared by primordial ethnicities as well as by modern nations. Modern nations, certainly, are associated with modern nation-states politically, territorially, and legally; the mythical side of ethnic identity/ies is hidden, although it can be unearthed at any time deemed necessary. In this context it is advisable to make a distinction between identity and culture: ethnic boundaries, Daniele Conversi suggests, are related to identity but ethnic contents are related to culture.[27]

Studies on ethno-symbolism have accumulated many insights in favour of "ethnicity" with a view to its contribution to the modern concept of a nation. Ethnosymbolism clearly expounds religious issues better than other theories of nationalism. In spite of the fact that it treats nationalism as a modern social construct, it also cherishes some elements of the Herderian heritage such as "belonging" at more depth.[28] It is not easy to talk about "belonging" in the postmodern or post-secular world under the ongoing processes of migration and globalisation, but it remains intrinsic to religious nationalism and continues to define local Orthodox Churches in a particular way.

Herder pointed out the "belonging" which the Enlightenment omitted. The moral relativism of the Enlightenment is a serious impediment to religious teachings, while nationalism entails a certain allegiance to a group/community.

So we learn that apart from Adrian Hastings all scholars of nationalism accept the vital role of modernity in the rise of nationalism which is viewed as an intrinsic characteristic of the modern world. With this common understanding in the background, however, studies in ethno-symbolism differ considerably from the school of Weber and Gellner.

"A medievalist" – that is how Adrian Hastings is referred to by scholars of nationalism – in his book *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion*

25 Ibid., 21.

26 Daniele Conversi, "Globalization and Nationalism in Europe: Demolishing Walls and Building Boundaries." In Multiplicity of Nationalism in Contemporary Europe, eds Karolewski, Ireneusz Pawel and Suszycki, Andrzej Marcin, 81-106 (Maryland: Lexington Books), at 85.

27 Ibid., 86.

28 On the pros and contras of the Herderian approach on nationalism, see Richard White, "Herder: On the Ethics of Nationalism, Democracy and Human Rights in South-East Europe", *Humanitas* 18:1–2 (2005), 166–81. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2de2/c1dceb5609f2111821debfbed3d72c6781b0.pdf

*and Nationalism*,[29] argues against "modernists" who strictly align nations and nationalism with industrialization and other characteristics of the modern age. Hasting, for his part, assigns the most important role to vernacular literature in the development of nationhood on the basis of one or more ethnicities. He describes ethnicity as "a group of people with a shared cultural identity and spoken language"[30] and nation as "a far more self-conscious community than an ethnicity", which has claims to political identity and authority over a particular territory.[31] He defines a nation-state as a "horizontally bonded society to whom state belongs". In the case of the nation state there is "an identity of character" between the people and the state and "a basic equivalence between the borders and character of the political unit and self-conscious cultural community".[32]

In the early stages of the formation of nationhood, Hastings attributes a vital place to the translation of the Bible into vernacular languages – as "the prime lens for biblically literate people"[33] – and then to the creation of an original literature in these languages. "Biblical Christianity both undergirds the cultural and political world out of which the phenomenon of nationhood and nationalism as a whole developed and provided a crucial ingredient for the particular history of both nations and nationalisms."[34]

Through the importance of the social role of language, both oral and written, Hastings recognizes the decisiveness of biblical influence within the European context.[35] The biblical influence implies the popular level, then reaching various segments of a society, which begets the nationalizing effect.[36] The Bible was a catalyst for the linguistic unification and development of a national consciousness: "correlation between biblical translation and what one may call a national awakening is remarkably close across most of Europe and for other parts of the world as well."[37]

At a very early stage, it seems, John A. Armstrong, in his book on *Nations Before Nationalism*, concluded that "ethno-religious social relations were

29 Adrian Hastings, The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism. The 1996 Wiles Lectures given at the Queen's University of Belfast (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

30 Ibid., 2.

31 Ibid., 3.

32 Ibid., 4.

33 Ibid., 12.

34 Ibid., 6.

35 Ibid., 19.

36 Ibid., 23.

37 Ibid., 24.

historically remarkably persistent, albeit changing".[38] Without searching for an answer to why the relations between ethnicity/nationality and religion are so intimate, Armstrong insists on this bond throughout his writings.[39] We learn also that Armstrong's work on nations and nationalism has proved that its students "should open up for the humanities and social sciences further and productive consideration of the problems of kinship, religion, time, and myth and symbol in human affairs".[40]

## Back to the Modernists

Gellner's influence on the studies of nationalism is very profound, not least through his criticism and conversations concerning some of the aspects of his own thought. Gellner's concentration on nationalism has been explained also by his personal experience as a Czech immigrant to the USA, not to mention the World War Two intellectual environment in Europe. He argued against those who mistakenly understood his theory of nationalism as legitimizing modernization.[41] However, he saw nationalism as a temporary phenomenon which "would lose its bite once modernization had been completed".[42] Most of the criticism fell on Gellner's adoption of a functional logic explaining the social and linguistic homogeneity of nationalism as an answer to the needs of industrial society.[43] Since his central thesis on nationalism is based on the actions of a social group that finds itself oppressed under political and economic forces, his theory is about seeking political security through the

38 Grosby, "Myth and Symbol. The persistence of Ethnicity and Religion. John Armstrong and Nationality." *Nations and Nationalism* 21 (1), 2015: 182-186, at 184. This persistence led Anthony D. Smith to classify Armstrong's works as "perennialist", although Grosby has another opinion on it; for example, Armstrong's reluctance to differentiate conceptually between the categories of "ethnicity" and "nationality" was supported by his conviction that both are a part of "a continuum of identity structures": Anthony D. Smith, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 6; Grosby, 183.

39 Grosby, 185. "The legitimacy of the ethno-religious collectivity was drawn from its assertions linking the putative origin and subsequent development of the this-worldly relations of nativity – ethnicity – with the order of the other world, thereby providing a temporally deep, intergenerational, meaningful orientation or stability for human conduct and relation in what would otherwise be a meaningless universe" (John A. Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982, 283) (ibid., 185).

40 Grosby, 186.

41 Ernest Gellner, "Reply to Critics." Quoted from John A. Hall, "Introduction." In *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism,* edited by John A. Hall, 1-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 4.

42 Hall, 7.

43 Ibid., 8.

group. Cultural differentiation also plays an important role in the ongoing disadvantage of the group: "inoffensive under the old social order, [it] is automatically experienced as oppression in the age of anonymity, mobility, and pervasive bureaucratisation with a standardised idiom."[44] Gellner sees nationalism as inevitable and as not entirely successful for states.[45]

Charles Taylor fully agrees with Gellner's understanding of nationalism as a modern phenomenon, stressing potential discrimination on the part of the authorities, which he, in his own way, connects with the "politics of recognition". In the spirit of Gellner, a state-focused modern nationalism is under discussion here: seeking state sovereignty as a means of parting company with the dominant power defined as the principle of self-determination. Taylor sees the "secret" of nationalism in the need of a polity that sustains the whole of society. Western societies attempt to apply the principle of popular sovereignty under the system of representative democracy, which requires a great deal of commitment on the part of citizens. "The modern democratic state needs a healthy degree of patriotism, a strong sense of identification with the polity.[46] One interesting addition, however, is Taylor's fascination with Benedict Anderson's idea of "imagined communities".[47] Taylor especially cherishes the fact that, in his reading, Anderson unites two features: a shift from the hierarchical to the horizontal, and, a reduction of the modern social imaginary to secular time. The combination of the two introduces a new sense of "belonging", new kind of "patriotism". Taylor clearly analyses nationalism as "a response to the modern predicament", seeing in it also a more intimate link to a threatened dignity.[48]

A critic of state-centred nationalism, Rogers Brubaker, in referring to the unprecedented transnational migration and multiculturalism of recent times, corrects Gellner on the homogeneity of the nation states.[49] At the same time, following in Gellner's footsteps, he "demolishes" myths of nationalism and ethnicity, largely in a context of the former Soviet Union. Among these misconceptions, Brubaker lists "architectonical illusion", the belief that national conflicts can be resolved by discovering a proper territorial and institutional

44 Gellner, "Reply to Critics", 10.

45 Hall, 11. Hall refers to Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 43-50.

46 Charles Taylor, "Nationalism and Modernity". In Hall, 191-218, at 199.

47 Ibid., 192, 196. In his well-known treatment of modernity, Taylor finds an explanation in two features: a shift from the hierarchical to the horizontal and the reduced horizon of the modern social imaginary that accommodates its actions to secular time.

48 Ibid., 207.

49 One of the underlying thoughts in this research is the exclusion of homogeneity in treatment of the issue of autocephaly.

framework – an understanding of nationalism as primarily a nation-based, state-seeking activity: "nationhood is not an ambiguous social fact; it is a contestable – and often contested – political claim. Consequently, neither the principle of national self-determination nor the principle of nationality can provide an unambiguous guide to the reorganisation of political space."[50] Nation is an "essentially contested" concept.[51] Brubaker is against "one-size-fits-all" solutions and resolutions of national conflicts. Institutional design matters but it cannot solve conflicts.[52] Another misconception is the "seething cauldron view of eastern European nationalism,"[53] and he objects to undifferentiated images of the region such as the Caucasus or the former Yugoslavia. Brubaker agrees that referring to Eastern Europe as a "Modigliani painting" (he uses Gellner's expression) is not going to work with regard to any concept, not to mention nationalism. Hungary and Poland are very different from Russia and Georgia, but the latter could be paired with Romania and Bulgaria to some extent because of the national Orthodox Churches in these countries. Even that similarity is not sufficient to draw overall conclusions about nationalism beyond scratching the surface. This is in agreement with studies of religious nationalism where both a particular context and a general framework are indispensable.

Brubaker's judgment on the manipulation of ethnic or national issues in the communist era is fair: by the time of the collapse of the Soviet regime, institutionalized forms of nationhood and nationality were empty of content, comprising "a set of boundary-markers, a legitimate form of public and private identities"[54] ready to be politicized.[55]

In his introduction to the book on Gellner, Hall points out that Gellner took criticism from the point of view of primordialism seriously, especially criticism by Anthony Smith and Miroslav Hroc. The latter writes that there are three undisputable characteristics of large groups of people [in Europe] sharing economic, historical, political, religious, linguistic, cultural, and geographic relationships: a memory of their common past, linguistic-religious ties making their communication different from any other communications beyond the group, equality of all members organized as a civil society.[56] The formation of

50 Rogers Brubaker, "Myths and Misconceptions in the Study of Nationalism", in Hall, 272-306, at 278.

51 Ibid., 179.

52 Ibid., 280.

53 Ibid., 281.

54 Ibid., 287.

55 Ibid., 287-8.

56 Miroslav Hroc, "Real and Constructed: the Nature of the Nation", in Hall, *T* 91-106, at 93-4.

these groups, i.e. nations, takes centuries but these are not eternal categories and the narrative of their origin is a myth. Hroc identifies two processes in the formation of a large group, in the Middle Ages and in the nineteenth century. The latter is about a basic social transformation due to industrialization and modernization. He identifies nations as having their own "ruling class/ nobility, statehood and continuous literary tradition in vernacular".[57] These commonly shared phenomena shape a national identity that is also an act of self-determination seeking autonomy. Hroc points out a complex relationship between "nation" and "national identity" (i.e. national consciousness, "nationalism"), as "one of mutual and complementary correlation", and leaves the discussion on which of them is "primary" to philosophers and ideologues.[58]

Hroc and Gellner concur on nation-forming in the context of the social and cultural transformation of the modern age, "a shift in relations among real, actually existing people, who had their specific interests and concrete social background".[59] Hroc, however, does not agree that nations are mere myth, nor does he agree with Gellner's understanding of nationalism according to which nation is a mere derivative.[60]

In recent studies on nationalism one comes across statements indicating the importance of making the scope of the studies wider. As Brubaker points out, there are no "one-size-fits-all" solutions[61] on national conflicts, because of the unexplored particularities of ethnic and national conflicts hidden in political rhetoric, locally or trans-nationally. The same applies to the search of a *single theory* of nationalism: "for the theoretical problems associated with nationhood and nationalism, like the practical political problems, are multiform and varied, and not susceptible of resolution through a single theoretical (or practical) approach".[62] This approach encourages religion and theology to build more bridges with studies on nationalism. With regard to matters concerning the nationalism of Orthodox nations and local Orthodox Churches, it seems impossible to navigate a way through them without the support of wisdom gleaned by the social sciences in the field of nations and nationhood.

In established nation states nationalism comes to the surface during a crisis; on a daily basis it is not visible. This is because it is reproduced in a

57 Ibid., 94.

58 Ibid., 104.

59 Ibid., 102.

60 Ibid., 104.

61 Ibid., 288.

62 Ibid., 299.

banally mundane way, writes Michael Billig. Banal nationalism is taken for granted as an intrinsic part of the everyday life. Nobody notices flags or other "ideological habits by which nations are reproduced", for example, maintaining armies or thinking that "some things are more valuable than life itself".[63] In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in the name of a nation wars and conflicts occurred for ideological, racial, religious, and geopolitical reasons. Billig rules out the "semantic restriction of nationalism" to small and exotic places. Rather, he suggests that nationalism covers the "ideological means by which nation-states are reproduced":

In disputed political cases they agree that nations and languages really exist. Labelling groups as people or nation in political debates is a part of politics. […] nation is something that contemporary people think is worth the sacrifice. Nationalism is more than identity, it is a way of being within the world of nations.[64]

Billig claims that there is a direct link between ideological forces, visible or invisible, and the genesis of a nation. The banality of nationalism cannot be thought of as being synonymous with harmlessness; on the contrary, it may produce evil institutions.[65] Thus the "banality" of nationalism can be as a strong weapon under critical circumstances, as it is unnoticeable in peaceful daily life.

Nationalism at heart is a "boundary-building process", says Daniele Conversi, an expert on Basque nationalism, in spite of its launching framework, which could be as "positive" in intention as a "binding" together for national security.

It is believed that all these insights could help to unpack a complex issue of religious nationalism.

63 Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Books, 1995), Introduction.

64 *Banal Nationalism,* Chapter 4. Billig speaks of "the boundary consciousness"[!!!] according to the theory nationhood, a people, place and state should be bound in unity. .. the bonds linking people and place are held firm by a universal grammar […] Initially Poets make a mystic bond between people and place, then politicians turn it into prose. Billig corrects that the community and its place are not so much imagined, but their absence becomes unimaginable. […] past sacrifices are invoked in the name of the present".

65 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem, A Report on the Banality of Evil*, (New York: The Viking Press, 1963) at https://platypus1917.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/arendt_eichmanninjerusalem.pdf