Chapter 4

Sovereignty, the Nation and Supranationalism

Introduction

In virtually all communities political rule is exercised through the institutions of government or the state. However, it is less clear what the proper or appropriate unit of political rule might be. In other words, over what population group and within what territorial boundaries should state power operate? For the last two hundred years the dominant answer to that question has been 'the nation'. It has almost been taken for granted that the nation is the only legitimate political community, and therefore that the nation-state is the highest form of political organization. Indeed, national sovereignty is usually understood to be the cornerstone of international law, giving each nation the right of self-defence and to determine its own destiny. Nevertheless, the post-1945 period has been characterized by a marked trend towards globalization, reflected in the growth of economic independence as national economies have been incorporated into a global one, and in the emergence of supranational bodies such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and the European Union.

While some have applauded this development, arguing that international federations and even world government now constitute the only viable units of political rule, others have protested vehemently about the loss of national independence and self-determination. This debate has usually focused upon the question of sovereignty and, in particular, the merits or otherwise of national sovereignty. Is the exercise of sovereign power essential for the existence of a stable political community, and where should that sovereignty be located? Moreover, considerable controversy surrounds the idea of the nation: what factors define a nation, and what makes the nation a viable, perhaps the only viable, unit of political rule? Finally, in an increasingly global society, forms of internationalism and supranationalism have proliferated. What forms has supranational government taken, and do supranational bodies have the potential eventually to replace the nation-state?

Sovereignty

The concept of sovereignty was born in the seventeenth century, as a result of the emergence in Europe of the modern state. In the medieval period, princes, kings and emperors had acknowledged a higher authority than themselves in the form of God – the 'King of Kings' – and the Papacy. Moreover, authority was divided, in particular between spiritual and temporal sources of authority. However, as feudalism faded in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the authority of transnational institutions, such as the Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire, was replaced by that of centralizing monarchies. In England this was achieved under the Tudor dynasty, in France under the Bourbons, in Spain under the Habsburgs and so on. For the first time, secular rulers were able to claim to exercise supreme power, and this they did in a new language of sovereignty.

Sovereignty means absolute and unlimited power. However, this apparently simple principle conceals a wealth of confusion, misunderstanding and disagreement. In the first place, it is unclear what this absolute power consists of. Sovereignty can either refer to supreme legal authority or to unchallengeable political power. This controversy relates to the distinction between two kinds of sovereignty, termed by the nineteenth-century constitutional theorist A.V. Dicey ([1885] 1939) 'legal sovereignty' and 'political sovereignty'. The concept of sovereignty has also been used in two contrasting ways. In the form of internal sovereignty it refers to the distribution of power within the state, and leads to questions about the need for supreme power and its location within the political system. In the form of external sovereignty it is related to the state's role within the international order and to whether or not it is able to operate as an independent and autonomous actor.

Legal and political sovereignty

The distinction between legal sovereignty and political sovereignty is often traced back to a difference of emphasis found in the writings of the classical exponents of the principle, Jean Bodin (see p. 165) and Thomas Hobbes (see p. 123). In *The Six Books of the Commonweal* ([1576] 1962), Bodin argued for a sovereign who made laws but was not himself bound by those laws. Law, according to this view, amounted to little more than the command of the sovereign, and subjects were required simply to obey. Bodin did not, however, advocate or justify despotic rule, but claimed, rather, that the sovereign monarch was constrained by the existence of a higher law, in the form of the will of God or natural law. The sovereignty of temporal rulers was therefore underpinned by divine authority. Hobbes, on the other hand, described sovereignty in terms of power rather than

St Augustine of Hippo (354–430)

Theologian and political philosopher. Born in North Africa, Augustine moved to Rome where he became professor of rhetoric. He converted to Christianity in 386 and returned to North Africa as the Bishop of Hippo. He wrote against the backdrop of the sacking of Rome by the Goths in 410.

Augustine's defence of Christianity drew upon neo-Platonic philosophy, Christian doctrine and biblical history. His major work, *City of God* (413–25), considers the relationship between church and state and examines the characteristics of two symbolic cities, the earthly city and the heavenly city, Jerusalem and Babylon. The heavenly city is based upon spiritual grace and a love of God, and binds both rulers and subjects to the 'common good'; its members will be saved and will go to Heaven hereafter. By contrast, the earthly city is shaped by a love of self and is characterized by absolute power or sovereignty; its members are reprobates and will suffer eternal damnation. Augustine believed that fallen humanity is tainted by original sin and that without sin there would be no need for government. Government can curb sinful conduct by the threat or use of punishment, but it cannot cure original sin. Although Augustine insisted that the church should obey the laws of the state, his emphasis upon the moral superiority of Christian principles over political society, and his belief that the church should imbue society with these principles, has been interpreted as a justification for theocracy.

authority. He built upon a tradition dating back to Augustine which explained the need for a sovereign in terms of the moral evil that resides within humankind. In *Leviathan* ([1651] 1968), Hobbes defined sovereignty as a monopoly of coercive power and advocated that it be vested in the hands of a single ruler. Although Hobbes's preferred form of government was a monarchy, he was prepared to accept that, so long as it was unchallengeable, the sovereign could be an oligarchic group or even democratic assembly.

This distinction therefore reflects the one between authority and power. Legal sovereignty is based upon the belief that ultimate and final authority resides in the laws of the state. This is *de jure* sovereignty, supreme power defined in terms of legal authority. In other words, it is based upon the *right* to require somebody to comply, as defined by law. By contrast, political sovereignty is not in any way based upon a claim to legal authority but is concerned simply about the actual distribution of power, that is, *de facto* sovereignty. Political sovereignty therefore refers to the existence of a supreme political power, possessed of the *ability* to command obedience because it monopolizes coercive force. However, although these two concepts can be distinguished analytically, they are

closely related in practice. There are reasons to believe that on their own neither constitutes a viable form of sovereignty.

In a sense, sovereignty always involves a claim to exercise legal authority, a claim to exercise power by right and not merely by virtue of force. All substantial claims to sovereignty therefore have a crucial legal dimension. The sovereignty of modern states, for example, is reflected in the supremacy of law: families, clubs, trade unions, businesses and so on, can establish rules which command authority, but only within limits defined by law. Nevertheless, law on its own does not secure compliance. No society has yet been constructed in which law is universally obeyed and crime entirely unheard of. This is evident in the simple fact that systems of law are everywhere backed up by a machinery of punishment, involving the police, courts and prison system. Legal authority, in other words, is underpinned by the exercise of power. Lacking the ability to enforce a command, a claim to legal sovereignty will carry only moral weight, as, for example, the peoples of the Baltic States – Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania – recognized between their invasion by the Soviet Union in 1940 and their eventual achievement of independence in 1991.

A very similar lesson applies to the political conception of sovereignty. Although all states seek a monopoly of coercive power and prevent, or at least limit, their citizens' access to it, very few rule through the use of force alone. Constitutional and democratic government has, in part, come into existence in an attempt to persuade citizens that the state has the right to rule, to exercise authority and not merely power. Perhaps the most obvious exceptions to this have been brutally repressive states, such as those in Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia or Pol Pot's Cambodia, which came close to establishing an exclusively political form of sovereignty because they ruled largely through their ability to repress, manipulate and coerce. However, even in these cases it is doubtful that such states were ever sovereign in the sense of being supreme and unchallengeable; none of them, for instance, was enduringly successful, and their very use of open terror bears witness to the survival of opposition and resistance. Moreover, in building up vast ideological apparatuses, totalitarian leaders such as Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot clearly recognized the need to give their regimes at least the mantle of legal authority.

Internal sovereignty

Internal sovereignty refers to the internal affairs of the state and the location of supreme power within it. An internal sovereign is therefore a political body that possesses ultimate, final and independent authority; one whose decisions are binding upon all citizens, groups and institutions in society. Much of political theory has been an attempt to decide precisely

where such sovereignty should be located. Early thinkers, as already noted, were inclined to the belief that sovereignty should be vested in the hands of a single person, a monarch. Absolute monarchs described themselves as 'sovereigns', and could declare, as did Louis XIV of France in the seventeenth century, that they *were* the state. The overriding merit of vesting sovereignty in a single individual was that sovereignty would then be indivisible; it would be expressed in a single voice that could claim final authority. The most radical departure from this absolutist notion of sovereignty came in the eighteenth century with Jean-Jacques Rousseau (see p. 242). Rousseau rejected monarchical rule in favour of the notion of popular sovereignty, the belief that ultimate authority is vested in the people themselves, expressed in the idea of the 'general will'. The doctrine of popular sovereignty has often been seen as the basis of modern democratic theory. However, sovereignty has also been located in legislative bodies. For example, the British legal philosopher John Austin (1790–1859) argued that sovereignty in the UK was vested neither in the Crown nor in the people but in the 'Monarch in Parliament'. This was the origin of the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty, usually seen as the fundamental principle of the British constitution.

What all such thinkers, however, had in common is that they believed that sovereignty could be, and should be, located in a determinant body. They believed that political rule requires the existence of an ultimate authority, and only disagreed about who or what this ultimate authority should be. This has come to be known as the 'traditional' doctrine of sovereignty. In an age of pluralistic and democratic government, however, the traditional doctrine has come in for growing criticism. Its opponents argue either that it is intrinsically linked to its absolutist past and so is frankly undesirable, or that it is no longer applicable to modern systems of government which operate according to a network of checks and balances. It has been suggested, for instance, that liberal-democratic principles are the very antithesis of sovereignty in that they argue for a distribution of power amongst a number of institutions, none of which can meaningfully claim to be sovereign. This applies even in the case of popular sovereignty. Although Rousseau never wavered from the belief that sovereignty resides with the people, he acknowledged that the 'general will' was an indivisible whole which could only be articulated by a single individual, who he called 'the legislator'. This has encouraged commentators such as J. L. Talmon (1952) to suggest that Rousseau is the principal intellectual forebear of twentieth-century totalitarianism. Similar claims have been made regarding the UK principle of parliamentary sovereignty. Governments that achieve majority control of the House of Commons gain access to unlimited constitutional authority, creating what has been called an 'elective dictatorship' or 'modern autocracy'.

The task of locating an internal sovereign in modern government is particularly difficult. This is clearest in the case of federal states, such as the USA, Canada, Australia and India, where government is divided into two levels, each of which exercises a range of autonomous powers. Federalism is often said to involve a sharing of sovereignty between these two levels, between the centre and the periphery. However, in developing the notion of a shared or divided sovereignty, federalism moves the concept away from the classical belief in a single and indivisible sovereign power. It may, furthermore, suggest that neither level of government can finally be described as sovereign because sovereignty rests with the document which apportions power to each level: the constitution. The government of the USA offers a particularly good example of such complexities.

It can certainly be argued that in the USA legal sovereignty resides in the Constitution because it defines the powers of federal government by allocating duties, powers and functions to Congress, the Presidency and the Supreme Court, and so defines the nature of the federal system. Nevertheless, by possessing the power to interpret the Constitution it can be suggested that sovereignty resides with the Supreme Court. In effect, the Constitution means what a majority of the nine Supreme Court Justices say it means. The Supreme Court, however, cannot properly be portrayed as the supreme constitutional arbiter since its interpretation of the Constitution can be overturned by amendments to the original document. In this sense, sovereignty can be said to reside with the mechanism empowered to amend the Constitution: two-thirds majorities in both Houses of Congress and three-quarters of the USA's state legislatures, or in a convention specifically called for the purpose. On the other hand, one clause of the Constitution – the state's representation in the Senate – specifically forbids amendment. To complicate matters further, it can be argued that sovereignty in the USA is ultimately vested in the American people themselves. This is expressed in the US Constitution, 1787, which opens with the words 'We the people . . .' and in its Tenth Amendment which stipulates that powers not otherwise allocated belong 'to the states respectively, or to the people'. In view of these complexities, a polycentric concept of sovereignty has taken root in the USA that is clearly distinct from its European counterpart.

By contrast, it has long been argued that in the UK a single, unchallengeable legal authority exists in the form of the Westminster Parliament. In the words of John Stuart Mill (see p. 256), 'Parliament can do anything except turn a man into a woman.' The UK Parliament appears to enjoy unlimited legal power; it can make, amend and repeal any law it wishes. It possesses this power because the UK, unlike the vast majority of states, does not possess a 'written' or codified constitution that defines the powers

of government institutions, Parliament included. Moreover, since the UK possesses a unitary rather than federal system of government, no rival legislatures exist to challenge the authority of Parliament; all legislation derives from a single source. Parliament-made law (that is, statute law) is also the highest law of the land, and will therefore prevail over other kinds of law, common law, case law, judge-made law and so forth. Finally, no Parliament is able to bind its successors, since to do so would restrict the laws which any future Parliament could introduce and curtail its sovereign power.

It can be argued, however, that in reality the UK Parliament enjoys neither legal nor political sovereignty. Its legal sovereignty has been compromised by membership of the European Union. As an EU member, the UK is obliged to conform to European law and is thus subject to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. This was underlined in the Factortame case of 1991 when for the first time the European Court of Justice declared UK legislation to be unlawful, in this case the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, because it contravened European laws guaranteeing a free movement of goods and persons within the European Community (as it then was). If Parliament can any longer be described as legally sovereign it is only by virtue of the fact that it retains the legal right to withdraw from the EU. In political terms, it is unlikely that Parliament has ever enjoyed sovereignty; it cannot simply act as it pleases. In practice, a wide range of institutions constrain its behaviour, including the electorate, devolved bodies, organized interests, particularly those which possess financial or economic muscle, major trading partners, supranational organizations, international treaties and so forth. Parliament's right to withdraw the UK from the EU is, for instance, only notional. As most UK trade is now with other EU states, revoking the UK's membership would involve such heavy economic costs as to be, for all practical purposes, unthinkable.

External sovereignty

External sovereignty refers to the state's place in the international order and therefore to its sovereign independence in relation to other states. A state can be considered sovereign over its people and territory despite the fact that no sovereign figures in its internal structure of government. External sovereignty can thus be respected even though internal sovereignty may be a matter of dispute or confusion. Moreover, while questions about internal sovereignty have in a democratic age appeared increasingly outdated, the issue of external sovereignty has become absolutely vital. Indeed, some of the deepest divisions in modern politics involve disputed claims to such sovereignty. The Arab–Israeli conflict, for

example, turns on the question of sovereignty. The Palestinians have long sought to establish a homeland and ultimately a sovereign state in territory still claimed by Israel; in turn, Israel has traditionally seen such demands as a challenge to its own sovereignty. The continuing importance of external sovereignty was also underlined by the disintegration of multinational states such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union effectively ceased to exist when, in August 1991, each of its fifteen republics asserted its independence by proclaiming itself to be a sovereign state. Similarly, in 1992 the Yugoslav republics, led by Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia, broke away from the federation by declaring their sovereignty. This was, however, fiercely resisted by the most powerful republic, Serbia, which, initially at least, presented itself as the defender of Yugoslav sovereignty.

Historically, this notion of sovereignty has been closely linked to the struggle for popular government, the two ideas fusing to create the modern notion of 'national sovereignty'. External sovereignty has thus come to embody the principles of national independence and self-government. Only if a nation is sovereign are its people capable of fashioning their own destiny in accordance with their particular needs and interests. To ask a nation to surrender its sovereignty is tantamount to asking its people to give up their freedom. This is why external or national sovereignty is so keenly felt and, when it is threatened, so fiercely defended. The potent appeal of political nationalism is the best evidence of this.

Although the principle of external sovereignty is widely recognized, and indeed enshrined as a basic principle of international law, it is not without its critics. Some have pointed out, for instance, the sinister implications of granting each state exclusive jurisdiction over its own territory and the capacity to treat its citizens in whatever way it may choose. There is, unfortunately, abundant evidence of the capacity of states to abuse, terrorize and even exterminate their own citizens. As a result, it is now widely accepted that states should conform to a higher set of moral principles, usually expressed in the doctrine of human rights. The phenomenon of 'humanitarian intervention', as evident in the removal of Serbian forces from Kosovo in 1999 and the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001, is sometimes seen as a reflection of the fact that a commitment to human rights now supersedes a concern for national sovereignty. Moreover, it is sometimes suggested that the classical argument for sovereignty points beyond national sovereignty. Thinkers such as Bodin and Hobbes emphasized that sovereignty was the only alternative to disorder, chaos and anarchy. Yet this is precisely what a rigorous application of the principle of national sovereignty would turn international politics into. In the absence of some supreme international authority, disputes between rival states will surely lead to armed conflict and war,

just as without an internal sovereign conflict among individuals leads to brutality and injustice. In this way, the classical doctrine of sovereignty can be turned into an argument for world government.

Finally, many have questioned whether the notion of an independent or sovereign state is any longer meaningful in an increasingly interdependent or globalized world. Modern economic life, for example, is so dominated by multinational companies and international trade that for any nation-state to regard itself as economically sovereign is a wilful delusion. In addition, if sovereignty is understood in political terms, it is difficult to see how many, or perhaps any, states can be said to be externally sovereign. Coercive power is clearly distributed unequally among the states of the world. For much of the post-1945 period the world was dominated by two mighty 'superpowers', the USA and the Soviet Union, which not only possessed the bulk of the world's nuclear weaponry but also developed a network of alliances to bolster their power. It could therefore be argued that only these two states were sovereign, in that only they possessed the economic and military might to enjoy genuine independence. On the other hand, the mere existence of the other superpower served to deny either of them sovereignty, forcing both the USA and the Soviet Union to, for example, press ahead with more costly military programmes than would otherwise have been the case. Nor is it possible to argue that the collapse of the Soviet Union finally made a reality of political sovereignty by creating a world dominated by a single all-powerful state, the USA. Despite a clear trend, strengthened since the terrorist attacks of September 2001, towards unilateralism and interventionism, US global power remains, in important senses, limited and constrained. This is illustrated by the USA's difficulty in countering the threat of global terrorism, controlling 'rogue states' that possess nuclear weapons, and in bringing peace and stability to post-Saddam Iraq.

The nation

For over two hundred years the nation has been regarded as the proper, indeed only legitimate, unit of political rule. This belief has been reflected in the remarkable appeal of nationalism, without doubt the most influential of the world's political creeds during the last two hundred years. Nationalism is, at heart, the doctrine that each nation is entitled to self-determination, reflected in the belief that, as far as possible, the boundaries of the nation and those of the state should coincide. Thus the idea of a 'nation' has been used as a way of establishing a non-arbitrary basis for the boundaries of the state. This implies that the highest form of political organization is the nation-state; in effect, the nation, each nation, is a sovereign entity.

Nationalism has redrawn the map of the world and continues to do so, from the process of European nation-building in the nineteenth century, through the national liberation struggles of the post-1945 period, to the collapse of the last of the major multinational states, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, at the end of the twentieth century. However, it is often far from clear what constitutes a 'nation', or why nations should be regarded as the only legitimate unit of political rule. It is still more difficult to identify the political character of nationalism, a force that has at times been linked to racialism and aggression, but at other times has been associated with international stability and harmony. Finally, it has been suggested that the days of the nation-state are numbered, that the idea of the nation is a hangover from the disintegration of the European empires of the nineteenth century and has no place in a world of ever-closer international cooperation.

Cultural and political nations

All too frequently, the term 'nation' is confused with 'country' or 'state'. This is evident, for example, when 'nationality' is used to indicate membership of a particular state, more properly called 'citizenship'. The confusion is also found in the title of the United Nations, an organization that is clearly one of states rather than nations or peoples. A nation is a cultural entity, a body of people bound together by a shared cultural heritage. It is not, therefore, a political association, nor is it necessarily linked to a particular territorial area. Nations may lack statehood either because, like all African and many Asian nations in the early years of the twentieth century, they are the subjects of a foreign imperial power, or because they are incorporated into multinational states such as the UK and the Soviet Union of old. Nations may also be landless, as the Jews were in modern times until the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and as the Palestinians are currently.

The cultural factors that define a nation are usually a common language, religion, traditions, historical consciousness and so on. These are *objective* characteristics but they do not in any sense provide a blueprint for deciding when a nation exists, and when one does not. There are, in other words, many examples of enduring and successful nations which contain, like Switzerland, several languages, or, like Indonesia, more than one religion, or, as in the case of the USA, a diverse range of historical traditions and ethnic backgrounds. Ultimately, nations can only be defined *subjectively*, that is by a people's awareness of its nationality or what can be called their national consciousness. This consciousness clearly encompasses a sense of belonging or loyalty to a particular community, usually referred to as 'patriotism', literally a love of one's country. Commentators such as Ernest

Gellner in *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) have, however, insisted that the defining feature of national consciousness is not merely the sentiment of loyalty towards or affection for one's nation but the aspiration to self-government and independence. In effect, a nation defines itself by its quest for independent statehood; if it is contained within an existing larger state it seeks to separate from it and redraw state boundaries. An alternative school of thought, however, sees the quest for statehood as merely one expression of nationalist sentiment, the defining feature of nationalism being its capacity to represent the material or economic interests of a national group. This view would accept, for example, that the desire of the French Basques to preserve their language and culture is every bit as 'nationalist' as the openly separatist struggle waged by Basques in Spain.

Because the assertion of nationhood often carries with it significant political demands, the definition of 'nation' tends to be fiercely contested. Many of the most enduring political conflicts turn on whether a particular group is, or should be regarded as, a nation. This is evident in the Sikh struggle for an independent homeland, 'Khalistan', in the Indian state of Punjab, the campaign in Quebec to break away from Canada, and demands by the Scottish National Party (SNP) for independence within Europe. Not infrequently, national identities overlap and are difficult to disentangle from one another. This is particularly clear in the UK, which could either be regarded as a single British nation or as four separate nations, the English, the Scots, the Welsh and the Northern Irish, or indeed as five nations if divisions between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland are taken into account. Such complications occur because the balance between the political and cultural components of nationhood are almost infinitely variable. The German historian Friedrich Meinecke tried to resolve this issue in *Cosmopolitanism and the Nation State* ([1907] 1970) by distinguishing between what he called 'cultural nations' and 'political nations', but when cultural and political considerations are so closely interlinked this task is notoriously difficult.

There are strong reasons for believing that to some degree all nations have been shaped by historical, cultural or ethnic factors. In *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), Anthony Smith stressed the extent to which modern nations emerged by drawing upon the symbolism and mythology of pre-modern ethnic communities, which he calls 'ethnies'. The nation is therefore historically embedded: it is rooted in a common cultural heritage and language that may long predate the achievement of statehood or even the quest for national independence. Modern nations thus came into existence when these established ethnies were linked to the emerging doctrine of popular sovereignty and associated with a historic homeland. This explains why national identity is so often expressed in the traditions and customs of past generations, as clearly occurs in the case of the Greeks,

the Germans, the Russians, the English, the Irish, and so on. From this perspective, nations can be regarded as 'organic', in that they have been fashioned by natural or historical forces rather than by political ones. This may, in turn, mean that 'cultural' nations are stable and cohesive, bound together by a powerful and historical sense of national unity.

Some forms of nationalism are very clearly cultural rather than political in character. For instance, despite the demands of Plaid Cymru for a separate Welsh state, nationalism in Wales consists largely of the desire to defend Welsh culture and, in particular, preserve the Welsh language. Equally, the nationalist pride of the Breton peoples of Brittany is expressed as a cultural movement rather than in any attempt to secede from France. Cultural nationalism is perhaps best thought of as a form of ethnocentrism, an attachment to a particular culture as a source of identity and explanatory frame of reference. Like nations, ethnic groups such as the Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean communities of the USA and UK share a distinct, and often highly developed, cultural identity. However, unlike nations, ethnic groups are usually content to preserve their cultural identity without demanding political independence. In practice, however, the distinction between an 'ethnic minority' and a fully fledged 'nation' may be blurred. This is especially the case in multicultural societies, which lack the ethnic and cultural unity that has traditionally provided the basis for national identity. In one form, multiculturalism (see p. 215) may establish the ethnic group, rather than the nation, as the primary source of personal and political identity. However, the idea of multicultural nationalism suggests that national identity can remain relevant as a set of 'higher' cultural and civic allegiances.

In other cases, national identity has been forged by circumstances that are more clearly political. The UK, the USA and France have often been seen as the classic examples of this. In the UK's case, the British nation was founded upon the union of what, in effect, were four 'cultural' nations: the English, the Scots, the Welsh and the Northern Irish. The USA is, in a sense, a 'land of immigrants' and so contains peoples from literally all round the world. In such circumstances, a sense of US nationhood has developed more out of a common allegiance to the liberal democratic principles expressed by the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution than out of a recognition of cultural or historical ties. French national identity is based largely upon traditions linked to the 1789 Revolution and the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity which underlay it. Such nations have, in theory, been founded upon a voluntary acceptance of a common set of principles or goals as opposed to an already existing cultural identity. It is sometimes argued that the style of nationalism which develops in such societies is typically tolerant and democratic. The USA has, for example, sustained a remarkable degree of social

harmony and political unity against a background of profound religious, linguistic, cultural and racial diversity. On the other hand, 'political' nations can at times fail to generate the social solidarity and sense of historical unity which is found in 'cultural' nations. This can be seen in the UK in the growth of Scottish and Welsh nationalism and the decline of 'Britishness', particularly since the introduction of devolution.

Particular problems have been encountered by developing-world states struggling to achieve a national identity. Developing-world nations can be seen as 'political' in one of two senses. In the first place, in many cases they have achieved statehood only after a struggle against colonial rule, for which reason their national identity is deeply influenced by the unifying quest for national liberation. Nationalism in the developing world therefore took the form of anticolonialism, and in the period since liberation has assumed a distinctively postcolonial character (see p. 102). Secondly, these nations have often been shaped by territorial boundaries inherited from their former colonial rulers. This is particularly evident in Africa, whose 'nations' often encompass a wide range of ethnic, religious and regional groups, bound together by little more than a common colonial past and state borders shaped by long defunct imperial rivalries. In many cases, the inheritance of ethnic and tribal tension was exacerbated by the 'divide-and-rule' policies of former colonial rulers.

Nationalism and cosmopolitanism

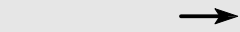
At the heart of nationalism lies a particular conception of human nature. If the nation is regarded as the only legitimate political community, this is because human beings are thought naturally to gravitate towards people with whom they share cultural similarities. In that sense, nations are organic communities which develop spontaneously. Conservative thinkers have usually been prepared to advance this argument in the belief that humans are dependent creatures, irresistibly drawn together by the prospect of security and social identity which nationhood offers. Sociobiologists such as Richard Dawkins (1989) have even suggested that the tendency to form kinship groups is rooted in human genes, a notion that can clearly be extended to explain the emergence of ethnic and national groupings. On the other hand, nations have also been thought to be 'constructed' by political and ideological forces. Benedict Anderson (1991) has stressed the degree to which nations exist as mental images or 'imagined communities', rather than genuine communities. Not even in the smallest nation will a person ever meet most of those with whom he or she supposedly shares a cultural identity. Whether they are natural or ideological entities, the belief in the nation undoubtedly has far-reaching political significance. Its precise nature is, however, a matter of

Anticolonialism/postcolonialism

Anticolonialism is a form of nationalism that emerged as the experience of colonial rule, in Africa and Asia in particular, helped to forge a sense of nationhood and a desire for 'national liberation'. Its origins lay in the inter-war period, but it reached its high point in the early post-1945 period, as the British, French, Dutch and other European empires collapsed in the face of the growing strength of independence movements. In a sense, the colonising Europeans had taken with them the seed of their own destruction, the doctrine of nationalism. Anticolonialism was thus founded upon the same principle of national self-determination that had inspired European nation-building in the nineteenth century, and which had provided the basis for the reorganisation of Europe after the First World War. However, anti-colonialism did not simply replicate classical European nationalism but was also shaped by the distinctive political, cultural and economic circumstances that prevailed in the developing world. In many ways, the desire to pursue a distinctively developing-world political course strengthened rather than weakened once independence had been achieved. Postcolonialism has therefore been drawn towards non-Western and sometimes anti-Western political philosophies.

Most African and Asian anticolonial movements were attracted to some form of socialism. This occurred for two reasons. First, the quest for political independence was closely related to an awareness of economic under-development and subordination to the industrialized states of Europe and North America. Socialism was attractive because it articulated a philosophy of social justice and economic emancipation. Second, socialism provided an analysis of inequality and exploitation through which the colonial experience could be understood and colonial rule challenged. Marxism (see p. 82) was particularly influential in this respect. Its strength was both that its theory of class struggle provided an explanation of imperialism in terms of the capitalist quest for profit, and that its commitment to revolution provided colonized peoples with a means of emancipation in the form of the armed struggle. However, since the 1970s, the influence of Marxism has steadily declined, its place being taken mainly by forms of religious fundamentalism, most significantly Islamic fundamentalism. The fundamentalist impulse in religion is sometimes based upon a belief in the literal truth of sacred texts, but is expressed politically in the assertion that religion provides the basis for social order and political conduct, as well as private morality. Islamic fundamentalists, for instance, call for the founding of an 'Islamic state', a theocracy ruled by spiritual rather than temporal authority. Multiculturalism (see p. 215) can be viewed as a form of postcolonialism in so far as it seeks to recognize the rights and interests of cultural groups disadvantaged as a result of past colonial rule.

Anticolonial and postcolonial political theory has the virtue that it challenges a predominantly Eurocentric world-view. Whether expressed in revolutionary Marxism or in non-Western religions or philosophies, it



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attempts to give the developing world a distinctive political voice separate from the universalist pretensions of liberalism (see p. 29). This has encouraged a broader reassessment within political thought, in that, for instance, Islamic and liberal ideas are increasingly considered to be equally legitimate in articulating the traditions and and values of their own communities. Critics, nevertheless, have portrayed postcolonialism in particular as a political dead-end and warned against its authoritarian tendencies. In this view, religious fundamentalism is not a viable political project, but merely a symptom of the difficult adjustments that the process of modernisation brings about. A further danger is that it is implicitly totalitarian, laying down principles for political organization that are by definition absolute and unquestionable.

Key figures

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (see p. 180) Gandhi advanced a political philosophy based upon a religious ethic of non-violence and self-sacrifice, ultimately rooted in Hinduism. In his view, violence, 'the doctrine of the sword', was a Western imposition upon India. His notion of non-violent non-cooperation, *satyagraha*, was intended both to manifest national strength and to constitute a new form of spiritual freedom.

Marcus Garvey (1887–1940) A Jamaican political thinker and activist, Garvey was a pioneer of black nationalism. His political message mixed a call for black pride with an insistence upon economic self-sufficiency. A leader of the 'back to Africa' movement, Garvey developed a philosophy based upon racial segregation and the re-establishment of black consciousness through an emphasis upon African culture and identity. Garvey's ideas helped to shape the Black Power movement of the 1960s and have influenced groups such as the Nation of Islam.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1900–89) An Iranian cleric and political leader, Khomeini was the foremost exponent of militant political Islam. His world view was rooted in a clear division between the oppressed, understood largely as the poor and excluded of the developing world, and the oppressors, seen as the twin Satans: the United States and the Soviet Union. He called for the establishment of an 'Islamic republic' as a system of institutionalized clerical rule, recognizing that this was based upon a novel interpretation of Islamic doctrine. Under his influence, Islam became a theo-political project aimed at regenerating the Islamic world by ridding it of occupation and corruption from outside.

Franz Fanon (1926–61) A Martinique-born French revolutionary theorist, Fanon is best known for his emphasis upon violence as a feature of the anticolonial struggle. His theory of imperialism emphasized the psychological dimension of colonial subjugation. Decolonialization is therefore not merely a

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political process, but one through which a new 'species' of man is created. Fanon argued that only the cathartic experience of violence is powerful enough to bring about this psycho–political regeneration. Fanon's major works include *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), *The Wretched of the Earth* (1962) and *Towards the African Revolution* (1964).

Edward Said (1935–2003) A Jerusalem-born US academic and literary critic, Said was a leading advocate of the Palestinian cause and major influence upon anticolonial and postcolonial theory. He developed, from the 1970s onwards, a humanist critique of the Western Enlightenment that uncovered its links to colonialism and highlighted 'narratives of oppression', cultural and ideological biases that that disempowered colonized peoples by representing them as the non-Western 'other'. Most influentially, he portrayed 'Orientalism' as a form of cultural imperialism. His best-known works include *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1993).

Further reading

Essien-Udom, E. V. *Black Nationalism: A Search for Identity in America*. Chicago University Press, 1972.

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Zubaida, Sami *Islam, the People and the State*. London: Routledge, 1989.

considerable debate. In particular, are nations exclusive groups, unwelcoming and intolerant of minorities, and naturally suspicious, even aggressive, towards other nations? Or can nations live in peace and harmony with one another and also accept a high degree of cultural and ethnic pluralism within their borders?

Certain forms of nationalism are without doubt illiberal and intolerant. This applies when nationhood is defined in narrow or exclusive terms, creating a sharp divide between those who are members of a nation and those who are alien to it. Exclusive nationalism is usually a response to the perception that the nation is under threat from within or without, a perception that provokes a heightened sense of unity and is often expressed in hostility and sometimes violence. The integrity of the nation can be challenged by a broad variety of factors, including rapid socio-economic change, political instability, communal rivalry, an upsurge in immigration and the growing power of neighbouring states. In such cases, nationalism offers a vision of an ordered, secure and cohesive community. However, this form of nationalism invariably rejects liberal-democratic principles and is more commonly associated with authoritarian creeds. This can most

graphically be seen in the case of fascism, which preaches a militant form of nationalism called ultra-nationalism. Termed 'integral nationalism' by Charles Maurras (1862–1952), leader of the right-wing Action Française, this demands the absolute subordination of the individual to the nation. Typically, integral nationalism breeds a sharp distinction between 'us' and 'them', between an in-group and an out-group. Not surprisingly, its clearest manifestation has been found in the pseudo-scientific doctrines of Aryan superiority and anti-Semitism preached by the German Nazis.

Exclusive nationalism also has clear implications for international relations. If immigrants and minorities within the nation are regarded as 'alien', foreigners outside are likely to be regarded with the same distrust and hostility. National exclusivity is thus often reflected in the form of xenophobia, a fear or hatred of foreigners. In such cases, nationalism becomes chauvinistic, aggressive and expansionist. There can be little doubt, for example, that both war and imperialism have at times had their origin in nationalism. The First World War was closely linked to a mood of popular nationalism affecting most of the major European powers, which found expression in demands for colonial expansion and finally war. The Second World War resulted from a programme of conquest and military expansion undertaken by Nazi Germany, fuelled by a heightened sense of nationalist zeal and legitimized by Nazi doctrines of racial superiority.

Such forms of nationalism are, however, very different from those proclaimed by liberal democratic theorists. Liberals have traditionally argued that nationalism is a tolerant and democratic creed which is perfectly reconcilable with international peace and cosmopolitanism. In origin, cosmopolitanism suggests the establishment of a *cosmo polis* or 'world state' that would embrace all humanity. Liberal thinkers have seldom gone this far, however, and indeed have traditionally accepted the nation as the only legitimate political community. Cosmopolitanism has therefore come to stand for peace and harmony among nations, founded upon understanding, tolerance and interdependence. Since the early nineteenth century, thinkers such as the Manchester liberals Richard Cobden (1804–65) and John Bright (1811–89) have advocated free trade on the grounds that it will promote international understanding and economic interdependence, ultimately making war impossible. The hope is that a stable and peaceful world order will emerge as sovereign nations come to cooperate for mutual benefit. Indeed, liberals believe that if the central goal of nationalism is achieved – each nation becoming a self-governing entity – the principal cause of international conflict will have been removed: nations will have no incentive to go to war against one another. Just as liberals reject the idea that nationalism breeds war, they also deny that it necessarily leads to intolerance and racial bigotry. Far from

threatening national cohesion, cultural and ethnic diversity is thought to enrich society and promote human understanding.

Such ideas, however, look beyond the nation and nationalism. As embraced by both liberal and socialist theorists, cosmopolitanism challenges the idea that nations are organic or natural entities. Liberals and socialists subscribe to forms of internationalism, which hold that political activity should ultimately be organized in the interests of humankind rather than for the benefit of any particular nation. Such a belief is based upon the notion of a 'universal' human nature, which transcends linguistic, religious, territorial, ethnic and national boundaries. It would be wrong, however, to think, that internationalism is necessarily an enemy of the nation. The nation may, for example, still constitute a viable unit of self-government and can perhaps offer a sense of cultural identity and level of social cohesiveness which a global state would be incapable of doing. Nevertheless, if human beings can, and should, identify themselves with humanity as a whole, rather than simply with their nation, this suggests that supranational forms of political association will increasingly play a meaningful and legitimate role. In other words, the days of the sovereign nation-state may be numbered.

Nation-states and globalization

Nationalists have proclaimed the nation-state to be the highest form of political organization, reflecting as it does the principle that the nation is the sole legitimate unit of political rule. Since 1789 the world has been remodelled according to this principle. In 1810, for instance, only 15 of the 191 states recognized in 2003 as full members of the United Nations were in existence. Well into the twentieth century, most of the world's population were still colonial subjects of one of the European empires. Only 3 of the 65 states now found in the Middle East and Africa were in existence before 1910, and no fewer than 74 states have come into being since 1959. In large part, these changes have been fuelled by the quest for national independence, expressed in the desire to found a nation-state. In practice, however, the nation-state is an ideal type and has probably never existed in perfect form anywhere in the world. No state is culturally homogeneous; all contain some kind of cultural or ethnic mix. Only an outright ban upon immigration and the forcible expulsion of 'alien' minorities could forge the 'true' nation-state – as Hitler and the Nazis recognized. As a principle to move towards, however, the nation-state represents independence and self-government; it has elicited support from peoples in all parts of the world, almost regardless of the political creed they may espouse.

The attraction of the nation-state is that it offers the prospect of both cultural cohesion and political unity. When a group of people who share a common cultural identity gain the right to self-government, community and citizenship coincide. This is why nationalists believe that the forces that have created a world of independent nation-states are natural and irresistible: no other social group could constitute a meaningful political community. This is also why nationalists have been prepared to accord the nation rights similar to those that are usually thought to belong to the individual, treating national self-determination, for instance, with the same respect as individual liberty. Nevertheless, despite evidence of the seemingly relentless spread of the nation-state principle in the proliferation of nation-states worldwide, powerful forces have emerged that have threatened to make it redundant. The most significant of these forces is globalization, linked to a complex of political, economic, strategic and ideological shifts in world politics that have accelerated since the collapse of communism. Philip Bobbitt (2002) has argued that the nation-state, which was characterized by the capacity of the state to better the welfare of the nation, has now been superseded by the market-state, which is able only to maximize the opportunities of its citizens.

Globalization is a slippery and elusive concept. It refers to a collection of processes, sometimes overlapping and interlocking processes but also, at times, contradictory and oppositional ones. However, the central feature of globalization is the emergence of a complex web of interconnectedness that means that our lives are increasingly shaped by events that occur, and decisions that are made, at a great distance from us. Not only has the world become 'borderless' in that traditional political borders, based upon national and state boundaries, have become increasingly permeable, but also divisions between people previously separated by time and space have become less significant and are sometimes entirely irrelevant. An obvious example of this is the immediacy and global reach of internet communications. Scholte (2000) has thus defined globalization in terms of the growth of 'supraterritorial' relations between people. In other words, social space has been reconfigured in the sense that territory matters less because an increasing range of connections have a 'transworld' or 'transborder' character.

The interconnectedness that globalization has spawned is multidimensional and operates through distinctive economic, cultural and political processes. Economic globalization is reflected in the idea that no national economy is now an island: all economies have, to a greater or lesser extent, been absorbed into an interlocking global economy. This is reflected in developments such as the growing power of multinational companies, the internationalization of production, and the free and instantaneous flow of financial capital between countries. One of the key implications of

economic globalization is the reduced capacity of national governments to manage their economies and, in particular, to resist their restructuring along free-market lines. Cultural globalization is the process whereby information, commodities and images that have been produced in one part of the world enter into a global flow that tends to 'flatten out' cultural differences between nations, regions and individuals. This has sometimes been portrayed as a process of 'McDonaldization', highlighting the growth of global goods and of increasingly similar consumption patterns and commercial practices worldwide. Cultural globalization has also been fuelled by the so-called information revolution: the spread of satellite technology, telecommunications networks, information technology and the internet. Political globalization is evident in the growing importance of international organizations, such as the United Nations, NATO, the EU and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The significance of such bodies is examined in greater depth in the next section, in connection with supranationalism.

Globalization has become a deeply controversial issue. In some respects, divisions over globalization have replaced more traditional left–right divisions, based upon the ideological struggle between capitalism and socialism. There is, nevertheless, a sense in which the pro- versus anti-globalization debate is nothing more than a reworking of the older and more familiar ideological divide. This is because the interconnectedness that lies at the heart of globalization is, as yet, invariably linked to the extension of market exchange and commercial practices. Globalization thus has a pronounced neoliberal or free-market ideological character. Supporters of globalization, sometimes called globalists, argue that the emergence of global capitalism has extended prosperity, widened opportunities and spread individual rights and freedoms. Although free trade reduces national economic independence, it benefits rich and poor countries alike, because it allows each country to specialize in the production of those goods and services that it is best suited to produce. Moreover, the spread of market-orientated economic reform fuels pressure for political reform in that a wider range of groups and interests seek a political voice. Globalization, in this view, promotes democratization.

On the other hand, globalization has also been subject to stiff criticism. The chief allegation made against globalization is that it has given rise to new and deeply entrenched patterns of inequality: globalization is a game of winners and losers. The winners are invariably identified as multinational corporations and industrially advanced states generally, and particularly the USA; the losers are the peoples of the developing world, where wages are low, regulation is weak or non-existent, and production is increasingly orientated around global markets rather than domestic needs. The cultural impact of globalization is no less damaging. Globalization has

strengthened a process of Westernization or even 'Americanization'. Indigenous cultures and traditional ways of life are weakened or disrupted by the onward march of US-dominated global capitalism, producing resentment and hostility which may fuel, for example, the spread of religious fundamentalism. Further criticisms link globalization to ecological destruction, the advent of 'risk societies' and to the weakening of democratic processes. Globalization's threat to the environment stems from the relentless spread of industrialization and from the dismantling of regulatory frameworks. Its association with risk, uncertainty and instability reflects the fact that wider interconnectedness expands the range of factors that influence decisions and events, creating, for example, more unstable financial markets and a crisis-prone and more unpredictable world economy. Finally, democracy has been endangered by the increasing concentration of economic and political power in the hands of multinational companies, which can relocate capital and production anywhere in the world and so have come to enjoy a decisive advantage over national governments, allowing them, effectively, to escape from democratic control.

The image of the 'twilight of the nation-state' and the advent of a 'global age' may, however, significantly overstate the impact of globalization. Despite shifts such as the undoubted growth in world trade and the information revolution, the nation-state remains the key political, economic and cultural institution in most people's lives. For example, the overwhelming bulk of economic activity still takes place within, not across, national boundaries. Indeed, as Hirst and Thompson (1999) argue, globalization may, in some respects, be an ideological device used by politicians and theorists who wish to make the trend towards market reforms appear inevitable and therefore irresistible. Globalization may not so much have brought about the demise of the nation-state as provided the nation-state with a new purpose and role. This can be seen in relation to both economic life and security matters. Although nation-states may, in a globalized economy, have a reduced capacity to control national prosperity and employment levels, they have a greater need to develop strategies for, among other things, attracting inward investment and strengthening education and training in order to maintain international competitiveness. The nation-state's security role and its capacity to ensure civic order has also, arguably, become more important in a globalized world, notably in the light of new threats such as global terrorism.

Supranationalism

Even as nationalism completed its task of constructing a world of independent nation-states, supranational bodies emerged in growing

number to challenge their authority. A supranational body is one which exercises jurisdiction not over any single state but within an international area comprising several states. While the twentieth century had seen national sovereignty treated as an almost sacred principle, as well as the virtually universal acceptance that political life should be organized around the nation, the twenty-first century may see government operating on an increasingly supranational level. There is, however, nothing new about supranational political systems, indeed these long predate the modern nation-state and could be regarded historically as the most traditional form of political organization.

The most common supranational bodies have been empires, ranging from the ancient empires of Eygpt, China, Persia and Rome to the modern European empires of Britain, France, Portugal and Holland. Empires are structures of political domination, comprising a diverse collection of cultures, ethnic groups and nationalities, held together by force or the threat of force. Although colonies continue to exist – for example, Tibet's subordination to China – the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought to an end the last of the major empires, the Russian empire. Modern supranational bodies, by contrast, have a very different character. They have developed by voluntary agreement amongst states, either out of a recognition of the advantages which international cooperation will bring or in the hope of gaining security in the face of a common threat or danger. In that sense, the advance of supranationalism reflects the growing impact of globalization. The supranational bodies that this process has generated have, however, varied considerably. In most cases, they merely serve to facilitate intergovernmental cooperation, allowing states to work together and perhaps undertake concerted action but without sacrificing national independence. In a growing number of cases, however, they have developed collective institutions and bureaucratic apparatuses, and acquired the ability to impose their will upon member states. Such bodies are best thought of as international federations. The emergence of more powerful international institutions and the progressive globalization of modern life have led some to suggest that we are now on the verge of realizing the highest form of supranationalism: a global state or some kind of world government.

Intergovernmentalism

Intergovernmentalism is the weakest form of supranational cooperation; it encompasses any form of state interaction which preserves the independence and sovereignty of each nation. The most common form of intergovernmentalism is treaties or alliances, the simplest of which involve bilateral agreements between states. In some cases, these have resulted

from a desire to achieve economic development, as in the series of treaties in mid-nineteenth-century Europe through which free trade was spread by mutual reductions in tariff levels. Since 1948, GATT and, since 1995, the WTO have provided a forum within which tariffs and other forms of protectionism can be reduced or removed by negotiation amongst signatory states. The goal of establishing a tariff-free trading zone was the inspiration behind the founding of the European Economic Community and the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), encompassing the USA, Canada and Mexico. However, alliances have more commonly been formed in a search for mutual security against a perceived aggressor. The years leading up to 1914, for example, saw Europe divided into two rival alliances: the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy, confronting the Triple Entente, composed of Britain, France and Russia. During the inter-war period, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy entered into the Rome–Berlin Axis (1936) which expanded to incorporate Japan in the Anti-Comintern Pact of 1937. In the aftermath of the Second World War rival alliance systems developed in the form of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact, formed in 1949 and 1955 respectively, and in other regional defence alliances such as the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). The terms of such alliances have, of course, varied considerably. They have ranged from little more than an expression of common principles, as in the case of the Axis between Germany and Italy, to an agreement in specified circumstances to undertake concerted and coordinated military action, which is provided for by the joint NATO command organization.

Such treaties and alliances are highly specific: they involve agreement on a particular area of policy-making, whether economic or military, and rarely address general or broader issues. Moreover, in signing such treaties states do not formally surrender national sovereignty. Treaties are signed and alliances are made in pursuit of national interests; states are therefore only likely to fulfil their obligations if they perceive that the treaty continues to reflect these interests, there being no institutional means of treaty enforcement. This was evident in the case of Italy in 1914, which, despite being a member of the Triple Alliance, did not go to war alongside Germany and Austria, but instead entered the war in 1915 on the side of the Entente powers. Similarly, in 1958 France withdrew its troops from NATO, not wanting them to be subject to the joint command structure. The central weakness of this form of supranationalism is that progress towards international cooperation is restricted to those areas where mutual trust exists and where national interests clearly coincide. This can be seen in the faltering progress made by arms control in the four decades following the Second World War. Ideological distrust between the USA and the Soviet Union and the rivalry inherent in a bipolar world

order, and reflected in the cold war, rendered such intergovernmental solutions ineffective and allowed the arms race to reach new heights.

Other forms of intergovernmentalism have involved not just bilateral treaties and alliances but broader agreements among a number of states to construct leagues or confederations. Leagues existed in ancient times, for example, the Achaean and Aetolian Leagues in Greece; in modern times the most famous has been the League of Nations, formed in 1919. In 1991, upon the disintegration of the Soviet Union, twelve of its former republics moved to found the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Leagues or confederations encompass a collection of states which agree to abide by a founding treaty or charter, usually in the hope of gaining strategic or economic advantages. The League of Nations was the first great experiment in supranational government in the twentieth century. In the hope of its leading proponent, US President Woodrow Wilson, the League would replace the 'power politics' of international rivalry, aggression and expansion, by a process of negotiation and arbitration which would make possible the peaceful settlement of international disputes. The League of Nations, nevertheless, proved to be quite incapable of checking the rampant and aggressive nationalism of the period.

In the first place, the League was weakened by the fact that it was never genuinely a 'league of nations'. Despite Wilson's efforts, the USA did not become a member; Germany, defeated in the First World War, was admitted to the League only in 1926 and resigned from it once Hitler took power in 1933; Japan walked out of the League in 1932 after criticism of its invasion of Manchuria. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, did not join until 1934, after Germany and Japan had departed. Furthermore, the League found it difficult to take decisive action: decisions taken in its Council had to receive unanimous support and, without a military force of its own to enforce its will, the League was forced to rely upon economic sanctions, which were widely flouted. The successes of the League of Nations were therefore confined to resolving minor disputes between small states; the League was little more than a powerless spectator as Japan, Italy and Germany embarked upon the programmes of rearmament and military expansionism that eventually led to war in 1939.

International confederations have proved to be more common. These have often been regional organizations designed to promote common political, social and economic ends, for instance, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Organization of American States and OPEC (the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries). In other cases, such organizations have had no distinct geographical character at all, as in the case of the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), which represents the world's industrially most advanced states. The Commonwealth of Nations, an organization of former British

colonies and successor to the British Empire, is also geographically diffuse, covering the Caribbean, Asia, Australasia, Europe and Africa. Confederations are voluntary associations whose members continue to enjoy sovereign power. Although confederations may develop permanent headquarters and bureaucratic staffs, they rarely possess an effective executive authority. In effect, confederations offer nothing more than a forum for consultation, deliberation and negotiation. Their value is that they enable states to undertake coordinated action, very clearly exemplified by OPEC's ability since the 1970s to regulate the price of oil.

However, as member states retain their independence, continue to retain control over defence and diplomacy, and are very reluctant to be bound by majority decisions, confederations have rarely been able to undertake united and effective action. This was evident in the inability of the OAU and the Commonwealth of Nations to exert concerted pressure upon South Africa in the period before 1994 for the removal of apartheid, which therefore amounted to little more than diplomatic condemnation and faltering attempts to establish economic sanctions. Such weaknesses have encouraged some confederations to transform themselves into federal states, possessed of a stronger central authority. Precisely this happened in the case of the 13 former British colonies in North America, which declared independence in 1776 and joined together in a loose commonwealth under the Articles of Confederation, adopted in 1777. The newly independent states, however, soon became aware of the need for joint diplomatic recognition and the advantages of closer economic ties. Consequently, they founded a federal republic, the United States of America, through the framing of the US Constitution in 1787. Similarly, the federal states which developed in Germany and Switzerland both started life as confederations of independent states. In the case of the CIS, conflicts between the newly independent states, and a common desire to avoid creating a successor to the Soviet Union, soon meant that it fell into abeyance.

Federalism and federations

Federalism involves the division of law-making power between a central body and a number of territorial units. Each level of government is allocated a range of duties, powers and functions, specified by some kind of constitutional document. Sovereignty is therefore divided between the centre and the periphery as, at least in theory, neither level of government may encroach upon the powers of the other. Traditionally, federalism has been applied to the organization of state power: central or federal government is in effect the national government, as occurs, for instance, in the USA, Canada, Australia, Germany, Switzerland and India; peripheral

government therefore constitutes some form of state, provincial or regional government. As a result, federal states may be regarded as sovereign and independent entities in international affairs even though sovereign power is divided within their borders; they possess external sovereignty though lack an internally sovereign body or level of government. However, during the twentieth century federalism developed from being a principle applied exclusively to the internal organization of the state into one been applied increasingly to supranational bodies.

The most advanced example of an international federation is the European Union (EU), the core of which is the European Community (EC), created in 1967 through the fusion of three existing European organizations: the European Coal and Steel Community, which had come into being in 1952, and the Atomic Energy Community and European Economic Community (EEC), which were established by the Treaty of Rome (1957). In the aftermath of the Second World War, powerful political, economic and strategic considerations pointed in the direction of European integration, and this goal was often understood in clearly federal terms, Winston Churchill envisaging as early as 1946 'a kind of United States of Europe'. Politically, European countries wished to ensure that there would be no repeat of 1914 and 1939, when European conflicts had devastated the continent and spilled over into world war. Economically, there was a strong desire for international cooperation and trade to rebuild a Europe ravaged by war. Strategically, many in Europe felt threatened by the expansion of Soviet power into Eastern Europe in the late 1940s, and by the prospect that Europe would become irrelevant in the emerging bipolar world order.

The EU is a very difficult political organization to categorize. In strict terms, it is no longer a confederation of independent states operating on the basis of intergovernmentalism (as the EEC and EC were at their inception). The sovereignty of member states was enshrined in the so-called 'Luxembourg compromise' of 1966. This accepted the general practice of unanimous voting in the Council of Ministers, and granted each member state an outright veto on matters threatening vital national interests. As a result of the Single European Act (1986) and the Treaty of European Union or Maastricht treaty (1993), however, the practice of qualified majority voting, which allows even the largest states to be outvoted, was applied to a range of policy areas, thereby narrowing the scope of the national veto. This trend was compounded by the fact that EU law is binding upon all member states and that the power of certain EU bodies has expanded at the expense of national governments. The result is a political body that has both intergovernmental and federal features, the former evident in the Council of Ministers and the latter primarily in the European Commission and the Court of Justice. The EU may not yet have

created a 'federal Europe', but because of the superiority of European law over the national law of member states, it is perhaps accurate to talk of a 'federalizing' Europe.

The process of European integration has, however, stimulated deep divisions and wide-ranging debate. On the one hand, some have remained fiercely loyal to the principle of national sovereignty, believing that it embodies the best opportunity for achieving democratic self-government. This was best reflected in the 1960s in the vision of French president, Charles de Gaulle, of a '*Europe des patries*', a Europe within which member states would continue to retain the right to veto decisions they considered a threat to vital national interests. In the 1980s Margaret Thatcher took up the same theme, dismissing as folly in her famous Bruges speech in 1988 moves towards the creation of a 'United States of Europe'. De Gaulle's and Thatcher's vision of Europe is therefore one of independent nation-states, a confederal not a federal Europe. From this point of view a European 'super-state' will never enjoy broad public support, and the attempt to establish what Thatcher called an 'identikit European personality' will only serve to undermine national cultures and identities.

On the other hand, the goal of a federal Europe has been openly embraced by many politicians within the EU on both economic and political grounds. The economic benefits of closer integration are linked to the stimulus to growth and investment which will follow from the creation of a larger market with few restrictions upon commercial activity. From this perspective, the introduction of a single European currency in 1999 and the expansion of the EU into the world's largest trading bloc should underpin growth and prosperity. In political terms, European integration offers the advantages of cosmopolitanism, reflected either in growing understanding and tolerance among the peoples of Europe, who nevertheless retain their distinctive national identities, or in the emergence of a supranational, European political culture which somehow incorporates the various national traditions. What is clear, however, is that the momentum towards European unity can be sustained only if Europe, or at least the EU, is regarded by its peoples as a meaningful political entity.

The genius of the nation-state was that political rule was underpinned by social cohesion: government was legitimate because it was exercised within what was thought to be a natural or organic community. Nations have a number of clear advantages in this respect, being, in most cases, bound together by a common culture, language, traditions and so forth. Supranational entities, like regions or continents, must seek to develop political solidarity among peoples who speak different languages, practise different religions, and are bound to very different traditions and cultures. In short, nationalism must give way to some form of supranationalism or

internationalism. The difficulty of achieving this was underlined by the sometimes tortuous process of ratifying the Maastricht treaty. This was only achieved in France, previously thought to be one of the strongest supporters of European unity, by the slimmest possible referendum result; and in Denmark it took a second referendum to demonstrate public support for the treaty. In the UK where no referendum was held, in part because it was likely to produce the 'wrong' result, Parliament only ratified Maastricht after the government declared the issue to be a matter of confidence and threatened to call a general election if defeated. What is clear is that if further European integration takes place without broad popular support this is likely to provoke a nationalist backlash against institutions that are not perceived to exercise legitimate authority; and this form of nationalism is likely to be resentful, insular and possibly aggressive.

Prospects of world government

World government would be the highest form of supranational organization. It looks to the construction of a global state which would stand above all other states, national and supranational. Indeed, strictly speaking, it would render both the nation-state and the supranational state meaningless, in that neither would any longer enjoy sovereign power. Two, sharply contrasting, models of such a body have been envisaged. The first is embodied in the notion of world domination by a single, all-powerful state. In some respects, imperial Rome established such an empire in ancient times, at least within what for them was the 'known' world. In the twentieth century, Germany under Adolf Hitler embarked upon a programme of expansion which, if Hitler's writings are to be taken seriously, ultimately aimed to establish Aryan world domination. Such a world empire, like all earlier empires, could only be held together by military domination, and from what is known of the potency of nationalism it is doubtful that this form of world government could ever establish a stable and enduring existence.

The second model of world government would, in effect, be a 'state of states'. Immanuel Kant developed what amounted to an early version of world government in his proposal for a 'league of nations'. Formed through voluntary agreement, by some form of international social contract, such a global state could develop the kind of federal structure which the USA and the EU already possess. Existing nation-states would, in other words, become peripheral institutions, enabling nations to retain their separate identities and to control their own internal affairs. However, central government in the form of the global state would be responsible for

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

German philosopher. Kant spent his entire life in Königsberg (which was then in East Prussia), becoming professor of logic and metaphysics at the University of Königsberg in 1770. Apart from his philosophical work, Kant's life was distinguished by its uneventfulness.

Kant's 'critical' philosophy holds that knowledge is not merely an aggregate of sense impressions; it depends upon the conceptual apparatus of human understanding. His political thought was shaped by the central importance of morality. He believed that the 'law of reason' dictates certain categorical imperatives, the most important of which is the obligation to treat others as 'ends', and never only as 'means'. Freedom, for Kant, thus meant more than simply the absence of external constraints upon the individual; it is a moral and rational freedom, the capacity to make moral choices. Kant's ethical individualism has had considerable impact upon liberal thought. It also helped to inspire the idealistic tradition in international politics, in suggesting that reason and morality combine to dictate that there should be no war and that the future of humankind should be based upon 'universal and lasting peace'. Kant's most important works include *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Critique of Judgement* (1790).

international affairs, coordinating economic interaction, arbitrating in cases of disputes among nations and providing collective security for all peoples of the world. For a global state of this kind to be viable it would need, as all states do, to monopolize the means of legitimate violence within its territorial jurisdiction, or at least have access to greater military power than is possessed by any individual state. This vision of ordered rule extending throughout the world provided the inspiration for both the League of Nations and the United Nations.

The argument for world government is clear and familiar. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, political thinkers argued the case for government by envisaging what life would be like in a 'state of nature', a stateless society. They suggested that if individuals were not constrained by enforceable laws, social life would quickly descend into chaos, disorder and, ultimately, civil war. They concluded, therefore, that rational individuals would willingly enter into a social contract to establish a system of law and government which alone could guarantee orderly existence. During this period, human societies were relatively small, and it made sense to invest power in the hands of national governments. However, since the nineteenth century a genuinely international society has come into existence through an increase in travel and tourism, the

internationalization of economic life and, facilitated by modern technology, widespread media, cultural and intellectual exchanges among nations. In such circumstances, social contract theory can be re-cast. Without some form of global state, the world order will degenerate into what G.L. Dickinson (1926), in the light of the First World War, called 'international anarchy', each individual state being bent on pursuing its selfish national interests. The absence of a sovereign international power is a recipe for chaos, disorder and, as the twentieth century twice demonstrated, world war. Individual states will therefore realize, just as did individuals in the state of nature, that their interests are best served by the establishment of a supreme authority, which in this case would take the form of a global state.

Clearly, however, major obstacles stand in the way of such a development. Perhaps the most crucial of these is the irony that the power politics which makes some form of world government so desirable also threatens to make it impossible to achieve. Economically powerful and militarily strong states undoubtedly reap benefits within an anarchic international order and may be very reluctant to concede power to a higher, supranational authority. This can be seen in the case of the United Nations, the most advanced experiment in world government so far attempted. The UN is a difficult organization to characterize. Like the League of Nations which it replaced, the UN is dedicated to the maintenance of international peace and security, and to fostering international cooperation in solving political, economic, social and humanitarian problems. It has, however, been far more successful than the League in establishing itself as a genuinely world body, comprising almost all the world's independent states. The UN has undoubtedly achieved a number of successes, but for much of its history it has been virtually paralysed by power politics. The UN has authorized military action on only two occasions, in Korea in 1950 and against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001. During the bipolar cold war period, the USA and the Soviet Union often took opposing positions, thus preventing the Security Council from taking decisive action. In the present unipolar world order, the USA has shown itself to be unwilling to allow the UN to constrain its freedom of action, as in its decision to invade Iraq in 2003.

The possibility that the UN could develop into some form of global state is clearly dependent upon the development of a very high level of international trust and cooperation. This must, moreover, apply not only at the state level, among national politicians, but also at the level of ordinary people, among national populations. Just as the success of supranational federations ultimately requires that they are perceived to

be legitimate political associations, so world government will be impossible to establish unless the concept of world citizenship becomes meaningful and attractive. This vision is one which supporters of 'universalist' creeds such as liberalism (see p. 29) and socialism are drawn to because they have traditionally looked beyond the nation and proclaimed the importance of human rights or a common humanity. However, so long as nationalism continues to exert a potent appeal, the prospect of a global state, underpinned by the idea of world citizenship, will remain a utopian dream.

Summary

1 Sovereignty means absolute and unlimited power. This may, however, take the form of legal sovereignty, ultimate legal authority, or political sovereignty, unchallengeable coercive power. Internal sovereignty refers to the location of a final authority within the state. Although much of political theory involves a debate about where such sovereignty should be located, the idea may be inapplicable to fragmented and pluralistic modern societies.

2 External sovereignty refers to a state's autonomy in international affairs. Fused with the idea of democratic government, this has developed into the principle of national sovereignty, embodying the ideals of independence and self-government. Critics nevertheless argue that in view of the internationalization of many areas of modern life, the idea may now be redundant or, since it gives a state exclusive jurisdiction over its people, dangerous.

3 The nation is a cultural entity, reflecting a sense of linguistic, religious, ethnic or historical unity: the nation-state therefore offers the prospect of both cultural cohesion and political unity. However, although its significance may be overstated, globalization in its various forms has created a web of interconnectedness that alters both the character of the nation-state and the nature of global politics.

4 Supranational forms of rule have developed to enable states to take concerted action and to cooperate for mutual benefit. In the form of intergovernmentalism – treaties, alliances and confederations – national security can be preserved. However, in federal international bodies sovereignty is divided between supranational institutions and member states. The success of such bodies depends on their ability to establish legitimacy and command popular allegiance, ultimately their ability to transcend political nationalism by fostering cosmpolitanism.

Further reading

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