Michel Huysseune and Bruno Coppieters

Conclusion

The introduction to this volume outlined three fields of enquiry. First, the contributors were interested in the type of institutional setting in which history and the social sciences are practised. It was important to address the question of whether this setting favoured a close – or even an instrumental – relationship between political leaders and scholars during a secessionist process. The second field of enquiry entailed identifying the kinds of scientific disciplines that were involved in the public debates on secession, and the types of normative arguments that seemed to be in strong need of scientific support. The third field represented analysis of the particular criteria for scientific objectivity and truthfulness used in discourses for, against and about secession. How do scholars involved in such debates reflect on these criteria – on both the epistemological and deontological levels? The authors have adapted all these questions in relation to their subject matter. In addition, they adopt a selective approach to them depending on their own interests and scientific specialization. These three fields of enquiry guide our comparisons between the cases analysed in this volume. It should further be noted that some issues – such as the consequences of particular institutional settings for scientific research on methodological choices, or a particular conception of objectivity – need to be analysed from different angles, with the result that these types of questions are addressed more than once in the following overview.

Ten Cases Compared: an Overview

The contributions to this book analyse a wide variety of secessionist crises. Of the cases described, the largest group is located in Eastern Europe (Yugoslavia, Ukraine, Tatarstan, Chechnya and Abkhazia), a focus that corresponds to the close attention paid by scholars since the end of the 1980s to the intra-state conflicts in the post-communist world. The other secessionist movements and

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processes described are to be found in Western Europe (Northern Italy, Flanders), Africa (Nigeria), Asia (Taiwan) and North America (Quebec). Each of the countries or regions displays a particular political and institutional configuration in which academics are currently debating the future of their nation. The Eastern European forms of interaction between scientific knowledge and politics during secessionist crises, for instance, reveal many differences as regards their development and outcome, even though a common communist past has largely predetermined the post-communist pattern of conflicts. Nevertheless, these cases also have a number of common characteristics – insofar as the political role of scientific knowledge is concerned – which they share with those in Asia, Africa and the Western world.

In the case of Ukraine, for more than a century intellectuals have played a central role in creating a national identity. 'Ukrainian studies' provided a framework for their long-term involvement in developing knowledge of Ukrainian society and history. This national intellectual affirmation took place largely in exile. The affirmation of a Ukrainian identity was countered first by the tsarist government and, after a brief revolutionary interlude, by the Soviet one, which imposed a 'Soviet' vision of Ukrainian history and society in which every Ukraino-centric perspective was gradually replaced by a Russo-centric view of past history. Post-independence scholarship now heralds a return to the tradition of 'Ukrainian studies', but it remains marked by the methodological heritage of Soviet scholarship. An even older tradition – of community-oriented scholarship in the populist tradition, and of other forms of involvement in political affairs by intellectuals – is also present in the Ukrainian case.

The discussion of the Chechen case shows the close connection between the rewriting of national history and political mobilization for sovereignty and independence. The overriding concern with the survival of a people who have undergone the most brutal forms of colonization and deportation explains the propagation of a culture of remembrance and the active retrieval of those aspects of the past that had been consigned to oblivion by tsarist and Soviet governments. Heroic resistance in the past legitimizes armed struggle in the present, while the virtues of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century heroes are projected onto today's Chechen warlords.

Tatar intellectuals have always faced particular problems in their efforts at nation-building. Rarely have political circumstances favoured nationalist mobilization, with the exception of brief periods of democratization in the wake of the dissolution of the tsarist and, later, the Soviet empires. The Tatar question is conditioned, moreover, by the complex geopolitical situation of a dispersed nation. In the present political framework, which was constructed in Soviet times, ethnic Tatars form only half of the population of the Republic of Tatarstan, and the majority of Tatars in the Russian Federation live outside the

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republic's boundaries. The Tatar regime and many nationally-minded intellectuals address this problematic situation using a gradualist and inclusive strategy – in which federalism and the defence of the interests of all components of the multinational people play a prominent role. Secession is viewed only as a last resort, to be pursued if Moscow opts for a repressive policy towards the Tatars. This strategy is echoed in the Tatar historical narrative, which highlights the past existence of a distinct, oppressed Tatar nationality and the legitimacy of the Tatar Republic as a sovereign state and a distinct subject of international law, but at the same time accepts the need for peaceful coexistence between Tatars and Russians and for the inclusion of Tatarstan in the Russian Federation.

The institutional context and scholarly traditions of the former Soviet Union have left a strong imprint on the competing affirmations of national identity by Georgians and Abkhazians. The persisting conflict between the two national communities is rooted in a situation of unequal power, institutionalized during the Soviet period. According to the Soviet constitutional framework, Georgia was a Union republic, whereas Abkhazia had the lower status of an autonomous republic, and was thus greatly dependent on both the Soviet and the Georgian authorities. The unequal privileges granted to the Georgian and Abkhazian 'titular' nations led to a conflict of legitimacy. Both Georgian and Abkhazian intellectuals sought political legitimation of the leading role of their own ethnic community in the republic which bore their name. Unequal privileges institutionalized a structural conflict at the academic level: during Soviet times, academic circles in Abkhazia defended the right either to upgrade Abkhazia's political status or to join the Russian Federation. In each case, this amounted to claiming the right to secede from Georgia.

The particular federal features of the institutional framework for research in Yugoslavia were largely responsible for the dissolution of the Yugoslav intellectual community. The growing powers of the constituent republics of Yugoslavia stimulated the production of nationalistic scholarship. A significant shift took place for instance with the internationally renowned 'Praxis group'. This group of philosophers and social scientists had at first striven for a socialist reform based on the universalist values of the Yugoslav regime. In the 1980s, during the crisis of the Yugoslav federal arrangement, many members of this group increasingly turned to a defence of national republican interests. At the same time, economic historians in Serbia and Croatia protested against discriminatory forms of economic redistribution, for which they held the Yugoslav federal state responsible.

Historiography in Quebec is tackled in the paradox of the increasing political affirmation of Quebec's distinct identity over the last three decades, which has coincided with a decline in historians' interest in Quebec as a distinct society. While previous generations of historians highlighted Quebec's status as an endangered nation, a victim of discrimination, contemporary scholars highlight

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its normalcy. This is done from an ostensibly value-free viewpoint, without recourse to nationalist rhetoric. This very discourse on 'normalcy', however, helps reinforce the new nationalism, which uses affirmations of Quebec's modernity in its striving towards sovereignty.

Belgian historiography has traditionally been a core element in the intellectual process of nation-building. This was already the case when the country gained independence in 1830. Since then, however, the images it has produced of Belgium and its constituent nations have changed dramatically. From the late nineteenth century onwards, in the wake of the emergence of new forms of national mobilization in both Flanders and Wallonia, historians have been either devising alternative national identities for the Flemish- and French-language communities, or attempting to enforce the view of an overarching Belgian national identity. The various narratives thus constructed have coexisted without really establishing a dialogue. This situation of mutual estrangement has been consolidated by the recent federalization of the country. Federalism has tempered the nationalist fervours of historical scholarship, but at the same time it has institutionalized the separation between Dutch- and French-speaking scholars.

The debate in Italy between secessionists and their adversaries is focused on the issue of institutional modernity and economic competitiveness. The northern Italian secessionist movement, Lega Nord, deploys the image of a modern, 'European' North contrasting with a backward, 'African' South in order to argue for the independence of the North and the creation of a 'Padanian' state. This discourse derives its credibility from mainstream scholarship in history and the social sciences, which frequently interprets the country as having an imagined geography which, likewise, contrasts northern Italy's modernity with southern Italy's backwardness. Notwithstanding the almost unanimous opposition to secession by the intellectual community, scholarly and secessionist discourses reveal converging interpretations of Italy's problems.

The secessionist discourse of the Taiwanese pro-independence intellectuals has been determined by the highly specific context in which they have had to operate. In the aftermath of the civil war in China, Taiwan became the stronghold of the Chinese nationalists of the Kuomintang (KMT), who regarded themselves as the legitimate rulers of China, while at the same time the People's Republic of China claimed sovereignty over Taiwan. The so-called native Taiwanese (who had been living in Taiwan before 1949) were discriminated against and their political representatives repressed by the KMT. The intellectuals of the Taiwan Independence Movement (TIM) developed their nationalizing discourse clandestinely. The ethnic identity originally proposed by the TIM at first highlighted their opposition to the dominance of the KMT and the Mainlander élites. They underlined those characteristics of the Taiwanese that distanced them from the Chinese. While still emphasizing Taiwan's historical specificity

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and the legitimacy of its independence, the TIM then abandoned its previous insistence on ethnic differentiation. This favoured an inclusive view of nation-building, based on the concept of a New Taiwanese community. This shift towards a civic identity parallels the process of political democratization and rapprochement between the KMT and the TIM.

The strong attachment of many intellectuals in Nigeria to the idea of national unity is partly a consequence of the trauma of the Biafran war. Nowadays, reflections on this secessionist war go beyond a simple legitimization of the political claims of either the central state or the secessionists (as was generally the case during and immediately after the war). In recent years, Nigerian intellectuals have combined a deep concern with national unity with a sharply critical attitude towards the Nigerian state. They have analysed its deficiencies – corruption, and political and economic discrimination – and formulated reform proposals with an emphasis on social justice and good governance.

The cases discussed in this volume are conspicuous by their diversity, and thus validate the broad definition of secessionist processes and movements proposed in the introduction. Secessionist movements deploy a wide range of activities, stretching from the striving for greater autonomy within a federal framework at one end of the spectrum to an aspiration to full independence at the other, and including a wilful ambivalence between the two poles ('sovereignty' in Quebec, or the oscillations between secession and federalism by the Lega Nord in Italy). Secessionist groups claim to speak on behalf of a nation – and where national identity is weak, they attempt to reinforce it. Secession clearly entails a programme of nation-building. The specific weight of nationalism can vary, however, and nationalism is not necessarily the main motive behind secession: in the cases of Croatia, Serbia, Ukraine and Tatarstan, some members of the communist leadership reinvented themselves as nationalists, without entirely abandoning the specific mind-set that had been typical of the nomenklatura under the previous regime. In cases where political aspirations are directed towards greater autonomy within a federal framework, as in Flanders, such a move is supported by nationalist, social-democratic and christian-democratic tendencies.

Science as a Social Institution and a Political Tool

The cases studied in this book reveal various forms of the politicization of scholarship in history and the social sciences, but at the same time they highlight the variety and complexity of the relation between the scholarly and political realms. The most drastic forms of instrumentalization appear not only in extreme situations, like civil wars, but also in the case of state-imposed visions of the nation in authoritarian regimes. The contributions on Ukraine, Georgia and Abkhazia,

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Chechnya and Tatarstan analyse the multiple ties that linked scientific research to the decrees of the Communist Party during the Soviet period. They all show how the writing of history at the various levels of the Soviet federal framework was constrained by an officially imposed 'Soviet' and strongly Russo-centric historical narrative, which severely curtailed research on other nationalities. In the case of Georgian-Abkhazian relations, a Georgio-centric view of the history of Abkhazia overlayed the Russo-centric one, which was common to all history-writing in the Soviet Union.

Politically dependent scholarship in the social sciences had difficulty in claiming to be scientific, when much of it was turned into propaganda or produced only low-calibre scholarship. Soviet scholarship failed to standardize cognition in a way that ensured coherence and congruence with reality.[1] This lowering of scientific standards in the social sciences, through their politicization, had dangerous repercussions for the Soviet Union, as was dramatically illustrated during perestroika. The reforms came too late to reorganize scientific research. The institutional setting for this research collapsed with the dissolution of the communist state structures. The lack of funds for education and research in newly independent republics such as Georgia and Ukraine then led to a brain drain from scientific institutions to more profitable branches of the economy or to the state administration. The consequences of this process were just as decisive in determining the general level of scientific research and scholars' dependence on the political authorities as the previous political restrictions imposed on academic freedom by state authorities had been. The post-Soviet period, despite the greater opportunities for scientific debate and links with the outside world, can therefore be regarded in many respects as being in continuity with Soviet scholarly traditions. This concerns the general level of scientific production, the continuous dependence of scholarly research on political support, and the general mind-set that produces normative statements in a scientific discourse. Despite the national or democratic ideals they may stand for, from many points of view intellectuals in the post-Soviet period must be analysed as Soviet intellectuals.

Notwithstanding the common communist tradition, the Yugoslav case differs markedly from the Soviet Union in its far weaker tradition of instrumentalization of the social sciences, due to a higher degree of intellectual freedom since the second half of the 1960s. Both nationalist-minded intellectuals and the Praxis group of critical intellectuals had (admittedly precarious) opportunities for voicing dissenting viewpoints. The federal structure of scientific research favoured centrifugal tendencies, with the research institutes of each republic developing a nationalist approach. That the authorities did not necessarily appreciate the nationalist stance of intellectuals is borne out by the reception they gave the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, published in 1986. The authorities were in fact initially reluctant to support the demands

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formulated in the Memorandum, which was only adopted two years later, in 1988, by the Serb communist leader Slobodan Milošević.

The political dependence of scientific research in the former communist countries is analysed in this volume by the contributions on Ukraine, Georgia, Abkhazia, Chechnya, Tatarstan, Serbia and Croatia, which were all parts of a federal arrangement. Here, political intervention took place at both federal and republic levels. In the case of the Western federations analysed in this volume (Belgium and Canada), the regional governments of Flanders and Quebec have far-reaching powers when it comes to financing education and research, and at the same time they find themselves having to legitimize their political status or defending the right to a greater political autonomy. In the case of Flanders, research programmes in historiography and social science are to a large extent supported by the regional political authorities, and this dependence affects the choices made by academics. This confirms the thesis put forward in the introduction to this volume, that societies that are late in acquiring statehood are characterized by institutional arrangements to ensure that social scientists are closely linked to the public authorities.

Although a 'within-system' bias is quite a probable consequence of a more bureaucratic type of scholarship, as suggested in the introduction, it is not always fruitful to interpret the close relations between political practitioners and academics as necessarily leading to a type of scholarship that merely serves and justifies political interests. Parallels between scientific and political discourses may, for instance, reveal a common outlook and shared viewpoints among the scholarly community and the political élites that go beyond an instrumentalist relationship. Historiography in Flanders and Quebec is a special case when it comes to the type of interaction between the scientific and political worlds. Where Flemish historiography is concerned, substantial state support is given to publications on the Flemish Movement.[2] Many of the Movement's activists, however, do not identify with the more recent academic writings on it. As long as the Flemish Movement contested the unitary Belgian state, its history-writing was strongly politicized, with political activists frequently contributing to it. Since the federalization of Belgium, writing on the history of the Flemish Movement has become more scientific, less militant. A similar shift has taken place in Quebec, where the contemporary generation of historians claims to conduct value-free scientific research, as opposed to the 'engaged' contributions of previous generations.

A comparison between the development of historiography and the social sciences in communist regimes in Eastern Europe on the one hand, and in late nations in Western Europe on the other, thus shows that closeness between scholars and the authorities may affect the quality of scientific research negatively, but that this is not always or necessarily the case. A 'within-system' bias is

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undoubtedly a logical consequence of research selected on the basis of the needs of the public authorities, but such a political bias does not necessarily lead to a lowering of traditional scientific standards. Far more important than any closeness between the two worlds, or a 'within-system' bias, is the degree of academic freedom enjoyed by scholars and the extent to which they are exposed to criticism from their peers.

And indeed, different types of dependence by scholars on public authorities are possible. In the Eastern European cases described in this volume, academic research was made completely dependent on state support. Scientific policies interpreted efficiency exclusively as a form of political legitimation. Owing to the absence of free scientific debate, discussions on methodology were to a large extent replaced by censorship and political criticism. The dependence on the political authorities, and the need to legitimize political decision-making, directly determined methodological choices, such as the dominance of ethnogenesis in archaeology and ancient history. The scientific activities of the Yugoslav Praxis group, which was able to achieve a certain amount of autonomy vis-à-vis the state authorities and had developed a dense co-operative network with left-wing scholars in other parts of the world, may count in this respect as a notable exception in Eastern Europe. The quality of their research confirms the view that a certain degree of academic freedom should be regarded as the first pre-requisite for high-quality scientific production.

In the Western world, the links between policy and research are based on particular traditions. In Flanders and Quebec, universities and research centres – even when they are entirely dependent on public finances – are able to organize education and research according to the traditional principle of academic freedom. Methodological pluralism is not at stake when scholars are involved in policy-oriented studies. Even in those cases where state authorities define the contents of policy-oriented projects, formal procedures protecting the traditional principle of academic freedom are increasingly being applied in the identification of the recipients and in the development of the projects. Low-calibre scholarship is largely useless to the public authorities themselves, either for identifying policy objectives or for legitimizing particular policies. If policy-oriented scholarship claims to be scientific, it will have to withstand additional scholarly critique. A comparison between all the case-studies presented in this volume would tend to confirm that a highly differentiated approach should be adopted regarding the link between the degrees of political and academic freedom prevailing in a country.

In many of the cases discussed, intellectuals have played a key role in nationalist mobilizations. Following Hroch's scheme of the stages of nationalist mobilization, referred to in the introduction to this volume, where the first stage consisted of the emergence of scholarly interest in nationalism, several of the

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secessionist crises discussed can in fact be seen as a transition from the second stage of patriotic agitation, in which students and the intelligentsia try to convince 'the people' of the importance of their own national identity, to a third stage, in which the movement gains mass support. This has effectively been the case in Taiwan, Tatarstan, Georgia, Abkhazia and Yugoslavia. In Italy, on the contrary, the vast majority of the intellectual community strenuously opposes northern secessionism. Since the Biafran war, intellectuals in Nigeria have likewise been opposed to secessionism. Both in Flanders and in Quebec, the role of intellectuals was important in the past, but has now diminished. In Flanders, the Flemish Movement has become institutionalized, and the younger generation of intellectuals is less prone to be attracted by its programme. In Ukraine, achieving independence preceded the involvement of intellectuals in nation-building.

The cases studied differ not only in the degree of involvement of intellectuals, but also in the effects of this involvement. Several of the contributions analyse how and to what extent intellectuals have had a radicalizing role in processes of secession. They have often been involved in antagonistic and confrontational identity-building, with little regard for accommodation between nations. On the contrary, their discourses have exacerbated divisions, since they have focused on the history of one particular ethnic group and have ignored or vilified other groups within the same nation. Georgian dissident intellectuals of the late Soviet era combined their criticism of Soviet imperialism and Russification policies with an exaltation of things Georgian and a disparaging attitude towards the cultures of the minorities in their country. They competed with the 'orthodox nationalism' of the Georgian Communist Party leadership. This led to a mutual radicalization, and to growing fears and increasing forms of political radicalization among the Abkhazian polity. Also among the Abkhazian community, radical intellectuals came to the forefront of the debate on secession. In Georgia and Abkhazia, they were more concerned with rebuilding their national communities than with creating a culture of tolerance and extending democratic rights. Similar dynamics of ethnic self-celebration have also characterized the contributions of intellectuals in the republics of Yugoslavia, both before and since its dissolution.

The case of Belgium shows in another way how definitions of the nation are framed within broader political and ideological discourses. The right-wing Belgicism that emerged during and after the first world war portrayed Belgian identity as threatened by political parties dividing the Belgian community, by the Flemish Movement, Jews and foreigners, and by neighbouring states. Its ideology was paralleled in the strictly ethnic definition of the Flemish nation given by the most radical right-wing faction of Flemish nationalism in the interwar period, which excluded Walloons, Jews and other 'foreigners' from the Flemish nation. Since then, however, such racial Belgicism has been marginalized, while

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most tendencies within the Flemish movement, and intellectuals supporting it, have likewise rejected racially exclusive concepts of Flemish identity.

The radicalization of a secessionist movement is not of course a necessary consequence of involvement by intellectuals. Definitions of the nation imply a political vision of its constitution, and hence reflect varying attitudes towards values like democracy and social justice, as well as varying assessments of political realities. New national identities may be based on pluralistic views of the nation. Tatar nationalist intellectuals were extremely active in nationalist mobilization in Tatarstan, but they were generally careful to avoid antagonizing other ethnic groups, especially the Russians. By using the concept of 'parity nationalism', which purports to give Tatars and Russians an equal role in the Tatar polity, they attempted to propose a nation-building model that took its ethnic diversity into account. The presence of intellectuals was conspicuous in the leadership of the Taiwanese independence movement too. They were concerned both with the construction of a national identity and with an extension of democratic freedoms. Their relationship with the Mainlanders in Taiwan evolved from antagonism to accommodation: the creation of the notion of 'New Taiwanese' is the result of an intellectual and political revision of the concept of the nation. It expresses a shift from an exclusive to an inclusive political identity. Similar attempts are to be found in the secessionist movement of Quebec, where the political discourses of some 'sovereigntists' reflect a definite shift from the previous exclusive focus on the French-speaking community in Canada towards a territorial perspective from which all inhabitants of the state of Quebec are viewed as Quebecers, regardless of their ethnic background. In the very different context of post-colonial Nigeria, many intellectuals combine a concern for democracy and social justice with a strong attachment to national unity, and hence a disapproval of any strong affirmation of minority identities that would endanger federal stability. Thus, while pro-federalist commentators expressed a certain amount of sympathy for the Ogoni movement – which was able to count on far more sympathy abroad – and showed some understanding of their grievances, this was overridden by hostility towards a movement they perceived as secessionist, and therefore dangerous.

The political effectiveness of a pluralistic historical approach is, of course, context-determined. The political failure of early Belgian attempts to construct a national identity (as proposed by figures like Henri Pirenne) which portrayed a Belgian nation based on the peaceful coexistence and cohabitation of Flemings and Walloons in one national, cultural space, was a consequence of the limited willingness of the political establishment to translate this vision of the nation into policies that accommodated the grievances of the Flemish. A similar phenomenon can be observed in Georgia and Abkhazia. Attempts by Georgian historians to construct a view of national history in which the Abkhazian

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nationality was part of the Georgian state 'from time immemorial' have likewise failed to convince Abkhazian political élites. This is due not only to the position defended by Abkhazian historiography – that their own statehood was established separately from that of Georgia – but also to their perception that the Georgian leadership is unable and unwilling to accommodate the claims of non-Georgian nationalities.

An analysis of the relationship between scientific and political discourses reveals common interests, convergences and mutual influences between scholars and practitioners. Only in some cases can this relationship be described in terms of instrumentalization. Scholars do not stand outside the body politic, and their contributions reflect the political concerns of the nation in which they work. The interests of the state on the one hand, and the political impact of secessionist mobilization against the state on the other, influence but by no means necessarily determine discourses in historiography and the social sciences. Several of the cases discussed show how intellectuals have also played an important role in criticizing biased viewpoints and partisan uses of the social sciences. Each of the cases reveals the complexities of the relation between intellectuals, the institutional context in which scholarship is produced and the production of nation-building discourses. Intellectuals may concern themselves with things national, disseminate their knowledge as a mobilizing tool, contribute to the construction of national identities, or even reproduce officially imposed discourses. The political pluralism of the intellectual community and the presence of universalist ideals and standards of scholarship offer powerful counterweights to nationalist intolerance and exclusiveness. The cases of Taiwan, Nigeria and Tatarstan demonstrate that this is so not only in countries with a well-rooted democratic tradition.

The Choice of Scientific Disciplines and Arguments

In the contributions to this book, history takes pride of place. The construction of a shared past remains the most obvious means of demonstrating the specificity of a community. Almost all secessionist movements deploy historical narratives to affirm their own identity. Even in cases where contemporary concerns dominate the debate, as in Italy, secessionists and their adversaries nevertheless tend to introduce the issue of a national past into the debate. Questions like 'What does the nation stand for?' and 'Who belongs to the nation?' tend to be answered in historical terms, in a narrative that gives national identity a meaning rooted in the past.

In some of the cases discussed here, avoiding the politicization of historical issues or controversies may be an explicit choice. In Nigeria, the reluctance of

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many intellectuals to use historical arguments may be connected with the use of history by ethnic minorities to claim national continuity and territorial rights based on pre-colonial realms, and with the risk of facing divisive interpretations of previous conflicts. Nigeria as a polity is in need of a legitimacy that history cannot offer (yet), because of the artificiality of its colonial borders, and because of its turbulent post-independence period. In the republics of the former Soviet Union, on the contrary, historical arguments have been particularly prominent among all the participants in debates on secession. The scholarly practice of ethnogenesis, the study of the formation of peoples, has connected contemporary national identities with the existence of an age-old homogeneous settlement of ancestors on the same territory. This denial of the considerable changes that an ethnic group would have experienced over time has been closely linked to the legitimation of a territorial conception of an ethno-federation. Proof of the presence of a nation on a particular territory from time immemorial has been used to support political claims to exclusive rights over that territory. Such debates have been actively pursued in Georgia, Abkhazia, Ukraine and Chechnya. The essentialist methodology of ethnogenesis is a great incentive to study a nation's remote past. It confirms Anthony Smith's argument that archaeology is particularly suited to lending scientific legitimacy to nation-building, since it combines scientific accuracy (and the material nature of artefacts) with historical imagination, producing a picture of the ancient past sustained by those artefacts.[3] The political importance of archaeology in the former Soviet Union derives from a primordialist definition of the nation, which is, however, less relevant in most of the other cases studied in this book.

The post-Soviet constructions of new historical narratives also have to be understood in a context in which previously marginalized groups attempt to rediscover their identity, and for that purpose try to restore what they consider to be the historical truth. Thus the Tatars attempt to counter the negative stereotypes of the Tatar Golden Horde and to give their nation back its dignity. Contemporary Tatar historical narratives offer a discourse on both ethnic affirmation (the rediscovery of the Tatar past) and ethnic accommodation (inserting this past into a broader Russian framework). Ukrainian historians during the Soviet era attempted to break away from dominant ideological schemes, and particularly the Russo-centric historical narratives, by directing scholarly interest towards the publication of archival material and memoirs, which would 'let the facts speak for themselves' and would give visibility to Ukrainian specificity.

The dramatic nature of historical narratives emerges most clearly in the case of Chechnya, which shows how the construction of such narratives combines memory and oblivion: the rediscovery of the Chechen past, despite attempts to domesticate and/or annihilate the Chechen identity, is combined with an obliviousness of those aspects of the past that show the collaboration and accommoda-

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tion between Chechens and the Russian and Soviet authorities. Here the restoration of national pride is translated into a discourse that highlights military resistance. Military history is also central to Serb nationalist myth-making, as in the evocation of the battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389. The debates between Serbian and Croatian scholars in the 1980s show, however, how history has also been concerned with more contemporary issues, such as the economic policies of the Yugoslav federation.

National history as proposed by historians from Quebec offers an undramatic counterpart to the Chechen and Yugoslav examples. The contemporary version of Quebec's history presents a narrative of national self-affirmation, and one that confirms especially a tradition of entrepreneurship, in which the issue of discrimination is of very minor importance compared with the historical narratives of previous generations. The evolution of scholarship in Flanders has followed a similar pattern to that in Quebec, and nowadays highlights economic modernity rather than past oppressions. The Western cases discussed in this volume are characterized by their limited interest in the more remote past. Even the Lega Nord, despite some attempts to give the so-called Padanian identity historical roots in a national myth of Celtic ancestry, highlights contemporary grievances in its nation-building discourse, rather than a historical narrative of national community.

The interest in things past – when useful in the construction of a national identity – does not only give historiography a predominant place among the scientific disciplines involved in discourses for or against secession. The historical approach to other disciplines, such as economics or international law, is also greatly favoured by those who defend secessionist arguments. In Taiwan, history is used in combination with international law in an attempt to prove the invalidity of the claims to the island made by the People's Republic of China. Of the social sciences, economics is the subject most frequently present in secessionist discourses and in related scholarly debates. Economic arguments may come in the form of affirmations of national economic excellence or of economic discrimination against a certain people throughout history. They may further be used to prove a nation's capacity for state-building. Arguments drawn from economics may also be useful to adversaries of secession, in order to prove the lack of viability of a newly independent unit. Arguments drawn from economic history are politically most confrontational in debates on discriminatory redistribution. Such arguments are generally combined with critiques of government policies. This was the case, for instance, in the polemics between Serbian and Croatian economists on the policies implemented by the Yugoslav government, and in the Lega Nord's critique of the post-war Italian state.

Shifts in the way nations are imagined are accompanied by shifts in the selection of scientific disciplines and arguments. The abandonment of a strictly

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ethnic definition of what it was to be Taiwanese was paralleled by a diminishing interest in scholarly investigations of the historical roots of ethnic groups on the island and in anthropological studies that highlighted the ethnic differences between mainlanders and Taiwanese. Political-science literature on the definition of a nation contributed to the coining of the term 'New Taiwanese' as a new national community to be created on Taiwan. Political science is no less relevant than economics in raising issues such as the inefficiency of an existing state. Political science can, moreover, be instrumental in proposals for alternatives to secession. In Nigeria, discussions on minority rights and autonomy, and more generally on institutional reform, purport to offer peaceful alternatives to secession. The case of Italy shows how the social sciences can be used by a secessionist movement. In its descriptions of an ideal northern Italy, the Lega Nord relies on recent research in the social sciences – especially by sociologists – which has highlighted the economic development of provincial northern Italy, the so-called Third Italy. The tendency of some social scientists to idealize this development, and to interpret it as the result of a civic culture with deep historical roots, has facilitated the political instrumentalization of these descriptions by the Lega Nord.

A wide range of scientific disciplines may play a role in secessionist crises. The contributions to this volume demonstrate that the use of disciplines depends on the political issues and grievances involved on the one hand, and the identity ascribed to the nation on the other. Secessionist crises may see the collaboration of scholars from different disciplines around a nation-building project. The 1986 Memorandum of the Serbian Academy, for instance, which triggered off the emergence of Serb nationalism, was drafted by writers, economists, philosophers, historians and linguists.[4]

The predominant position of history in this volume confirms its place as an intellectual discipline at the borderline where public and scientific discourses meet, allowing the participation of non-professionals. The narratives in which national identities are embedded give a particular relevance to its continuity, and hence history retains its central place in discourses that frame such identities. The concern in the social sciences with concrete policy issues should not be contrasted too strongly with the sometimes myth-making propensities of historical narratives. By shedding light on the roots of contemporary problems that are to be found in the past, history, whose role in national myth-making is often emphasized, can also help correct some of the myths put forward by the social sciences. Debates in the social sciences– for example on discriminatory redistribution – in fact demonstrate not only that the knowledge produced by these sciences does not go unchallenged, but also that these sciences can themselves be prone to mystification. The contributions here also confirm the difficulty of separating the 'scientific' from the 'myth-making' aspects of each discipline. The

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social knowledge produced by history and the social sciences gives rise to narrative interpretations of society. Such interpretations can be assessed for their objectivity, but can never be simply equated with an 'objective truth', with 'facts that speak for themselves'.

Objectivity and Moral Responsibility

The contributors to this volume have analysed the context-bound production of scientific knowledge and the ideological involvement of their peers in secessionist crises. It is undoubtedly true that such a critical analysis is itself also context-bound and value-laden. The expression of any choice and sympathy for particular views on the nation has to be understood as a contribution, however small, to the making of nations. The historical context in which this book has been produced was described in the introduction as a particular period after the end of the Cold War. In the 1990s, scholars intensively debated the political consequences of particular methodological choices. Studies in nationalism were then largely self-reflexive. The knowledge produced by historians and social scientists was perceived as one of the main forces responsible for the strengthening of nationalist currents in Eastern Europe and other regions of the world. The moral criticism of nationalism and ethnic warfare largely took the form of scientific self-criticism. The ideal of scientific objectivity was most prominent in the debates among historians and social scientists on competing views on the nation.

Such prominence is also to be found in some contributions to this volume, whose authors express their views on scientific methodology and the professional ethics of scholars. The ideal of scientific objectivity is here both an object of social analysis and a professional standard. This does not mean that the concept of scientific objectivity is necessarily made central to the various studies. It is made explicit only in a few of them (such as the contribution on Quebec by Ronald Rudin). But the idea of objectivity is undoubtedly present in all the contributions to the extent that they all address the issues of methodology and/or myth-making.

The contributions to this volume demonstrate the importance of the myth-making aspect in 'nationalizing' discourses. Myths of ancient origins play an important role in the cases of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, where they are sustained by a scholarly vision of historical and territorial continuity of national identity. In the Western cases, however, myths of historical continuity have lost much of their earlier relevance. In Belgium, for example, the various discourses articulating identity (Belgium, Flanders, Wallonia) have gradually relinquished such claims. Intellectuals in Nigeria have explicitly adopted a constructive perspective, abandoning the previous claims of historical continuity

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and concentrating instead on building national identity as part of the process of creating a socially cohesive national community. The Lega Nord's construction of a Padanian identity, on the other hand, includes a mythical nation-building narrative highlighting the existence and historical continuity of a Padanian nation. Its adversaries summarily reject this narrative but at the same time acknowledge the existence of a 'northern' identity, presumed to be non-national. This acknowledgement reveals the complex status of identities, which at one and the same time are myths and social constructs and are related to social realities.

The myth-making dimension is also present in articulations of national specificity. Ukrainians and Abkhazians have a populist myth emphasizing the limited social distinctions within their communities. Myths of benign paternalism have played an important part in Soviet discourses on the 'benevolent' role of the Russian nation towards other nations, and of the Georgian nation towards the Abkhazian minority.

Far more important for the cohesion of a national community, however, are narratives of victimization. Such myths are or have been present in all the nationalistic discourses analysed in this book. The relevance and strength of these myths vary from one case to another, and are particularly strong in the case of Chechnya, where the narrative of victimization relies on a long history of brutal oppression. In other cases, such as in northern Italy, myths of victimization come across as specious discourses that give a partisan account of history.

Narratives of victimization are frequently based on a perception of the state as representing or privileging the interests of a different community from one's own. Such a perception was a major motive in the secession of Georgia and Chechnya from the Soviet Union, which was perceived as being Russian-dominated. From the Abkhazian perspective, the right to self-determination included the right to secede from the Georgian Union Republic and to constitute its own sovereign statehood. Tatar intellectuals have opposed all attempts to be fully assimilated into the Russian state. Serbs and Croats accused the Yugoslav leadership of giving exclusive privileges to the other constituent nations of the federation. For the Parti Québécois, the Canadian federation represents the interests of the anglophone majority. In the case of Belgium, Flemish nationalists have regarded the Belgian state as being in the clutches of the francophone bourgeoisie, while francophone nationalists, on the other hand, speak of the '*État belgo-flamand*'. Similar claims have been made by the Lega Nord concerning the Southern grip on the Italian state. In Taiwan, demands for democratic reform came from the Taiwan Independence Movement, opposing the monopoly on the state by the Mainlander élites. The repeated crises in the years following Nigerian independence were caused by the fears of some ethnic groups that they would be dominated by others. The power struggle between the major ethnic groups in Nigeria for domination of the newly independent state sparked off

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frequent political crises and caused the failure of the Igbos' attempt to create an independent Biafra. In all these cases, the exercise of the right to self-determination was seen as being possible either through independence or through more moderate forms of withdrawal from the central authority, such as the creation of a federated state.

In some cases, myths of victimization have faded into the background. In Quebecois and Flemish historiography, they have been gradually replaced by new myths stressing the strength and modernity of the nation. This shift has paralleled a change in strategy. The nationalist discourse in the Quebec of the 1960s and 1970s replaced the strategy of survival with a strategy of '*épanouissement*' – a claim that access to sovereignty would permit the nation to blossom and expand.[5] A similar change of nationalist strategy (but with a demand for increased powers rather than full sovereignty), and corresponding changes in perspective among historians, have taken place in Flanders with the implementation of federal reforms. Even in the case of Chechnya, the nationalist discourse is, similarly, not confined to the myth of victimization, but also highlights positive national qualities. The Chechens affirm their historical agency through a myth of resistance.

Most of the myths analysed do tend to respect facts up to a point, and thus to confirm the limited usefulness of completely fabricated myths that have no basis in historical reality. The construction of a North-South dichotomy in Italy, for example, is based on real differences between the two parts of the country. The construction of Taiwan's civic identity is at the same time both a myth and part of a conscious strategy to give a large section of the Taiwanese population a secessionist political perspective. When such myths exhaust themselves at the political level, or are shown to be of limited use to the scholarly community, they simply fade away. This has been the case in Belgium, where the Great-Netherlandic approach has quietly been abandoned as an interpretative tool.

Overall, national myths not only affirm the presence of a national identity but also highlight the values this identity should incarnate. These may include military virtues in myths of resistance, or may reflect illiberal values such as authoritarianism or exclusiveness. Several contributions to this book draw further attention to the myth of 'modernity' in the Western scientific and political tradition. Historiography and the social sciences frequently incorporate a liberal-democratic model of modernity that features economic strength, entrepreneurial dynamism, democracy and some civic values. Economic modernity looms large in political and scientific discourse in Flanders, Quebec and Northern Italy. Economic modernity also functions as the standard to which many non-Western countries aspire, as is articulated for example in the strong pro-Western and anti-Russian tendency among the Georgian intellectual élites, or in the present interest among Tatar scholars in modernizing currents in Islam's past, such as Jadidism.

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The defence of this myth of modernity does not necessarily, however, include the virtue of tolerance. The myth of modernity may feature in a scientific discourse on 'other' societies, with varying consequences. Italy's North-South dichotomy implies a normative preference for the North based on the stereotyped creation of a backward southern 'Other' and on the location of modernity and backwardness in particular geographical regions. Croatian historians contrast their nation's modernity and Europeanness with Serbian 'backwardness' and 'un-Europeanness'.[6] Such visions reflect an aspiration to belong to the select club of superior nations in a deeply unequal international division of economic and political power. The possible negative side-effects are clearest when such myths attempt to exclude an allegedly inferior Other from modernity.

The contributions to this volume present various scholarly approaches to the scientific ideal of objectivity. They also refer to various forms of methodological debates among historians and social scientists. The possibility of open criticism depends on a number of factors, such as political pluralism or the status of scientific research in the overall social framework. This means that the status of myths within scholarly research is highly context-dependent. The case of Ukraine highlights how the Soviet social sciences were centred on an officially produced truth, with little interest in making these truths match the 'empirical reality' of the real world. Their discourse was based on a perception of social reality as being the result of a binary opposition between 'progressive' and 'reactionary' forces. In the post-Soviet context, the production of new myths about national history was facilitated by the continuation of Soviet scholarly practices, despite the rejection of their ideological premises. In Ukraine, for example, a large proportion of history-writing after independence simply substituted Ukraine for Russia as its central focus. This subversion of the Soviet official discourse has produced a '*discours nationalitaire*' which is no less biased than its predecessor.

Notwithstanding a one-party system common to both countries, the Yugoslav political system was more tolerant of open public debate and dissenting opinions than the Soviet one. The nationalist critique of communism which emerged in the later years of the communist regime was, however, certainly not characterized by a deep concern for objectivity. In the debate between Serbian and Croatian economists on discriminatory redistribution, both parties were adept at pointing out each other's methodological errors, but repeated similar mistakes in their own polemical fervour and seemed utterly unwilling to criticize their own premises. The dissolution of the Yugoslav intellectual community into its national components may be judged as an example of intellectual regression, in which the conversion of many former adherents of the universalist philosophy of the Praxis group to exclusive nationalism may count as one of the most significant signs.

Western scholarship has not had to confront officially imposed rules on scientific research, but it remains generally informed by the political context in which

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it is produced. The case of Italy shows a different relationship between myth-making and scholarly practices from that in Ukraine and Yugoslavia, as described above. Because its political consequences have been judged unacceptable, the myth of a Padanian nation upheld by the Lega Nord is almost unanimously rejected by the intellectual community, even though some constitutive elements of this myth derive from scholarly sources. The overview of historiography in Belgium shows how the mental map used by historians has closely followed political views on the national question, producing Belgicist, Flemish-nationalist and other historical narratives. The presence of a plurality of historical narratives can be regarded as an expression of intellectual pluralism and as indicating an acceptance that the history of a nation can be interpreted from different viewpoints. It may also, however, be seen as reflecting a lack of dialogue between highly compartmentalized scientific research institutions. Flemish and francophone historians are each developing their own vision of Belgian history, with only limited scholarly debate between the two intellectual communities. Such a lack of dialogue, however, never amounts to a situation of splendid isolation. A lack of communication also prevails in another federal country studied in this volume: when writing about their own society, French and English Canadians too largely ignore the scholarship of their co-nationals.

A lack of open academic debate is characteristic of all the secessionist processes studied in this volume, although to very different degrees. Such a lack of dialogue does not necessarily mean that scholars intentionally relinquished their objectivity. Georgian and Abkhazian archaeologists and historians were convinced that their reconstruction of historical material, designed to prove the presence of proto-Georgian or proto-Abkhazian tribes on a particular territory, was factually accurate. They overlooked the extent to which their efforts at reconstruction were inspired by the essentialist premises of the methods of ethnogenesis. Their conception of historical objectivity did not take into account the need for an open academic debate. The case-study on Quebec reveals a quite different view of objectivity, which is, however, also characterized by a lack of critical reflection on its own value system. A large number of Quebec historians are convinced that they are practising a scientific profession. They assume that their value-free approach has emancipated them from the political prejudices typical of the previous generation of politically engaged history-writers. By claiming objectivity, they are in fact eschewing a discussion on the set of values present in their own writings.

Scholarship on nationalism has highlighted the constructed nature of nations, and emphasized the important role played by intellectuals in this process of construction. If nations are 'imagined communities', they are also, however, political realities, or may become so through a process of nationalist mobilization. This raises particular problems in relation to the ideal of scientific

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objectivity. The key role of intellectuals both in the construction of national identities and in nationalist mobilization, and the possibly dramatic consequences of such mobilization, raises the further question of which 'national' viewpoints may be considered legitimate and confronts intellectuals with their moral responsibility in this process.

A situation of contested identities may favour political pluralism, freedom of research and scientific debate on the idea of a nation. But the existence of an opposition to mainstream concepts of the nation does not in itself guarantee higher scientific standards. Such an opposition may simply reproduce the types of argument it is actually criticizing. More interesting are critical assessments that go beyond unilateral viewpoints and question the premises that lead to reified identities. These assessments tend to confirm the characterization of objectivity as a set of 'character traits' such as the willingness to revise one's judgements when they appear to be ill-founded, the openness to learn from others and the capacity to dialogue in an even-handed and sincere manner with the people one is studying.[7] Seen from this perspective, the ideal of objectivity is value-laden and relates closely to the question of moral responsibility. Scholarship conducted along these lines counters discourses of national exclusiveness and self-congratulatory discourses of national excellence.

The contributions to this book show that this ideal of objectivity is conditioned by several factors. The rules governing the various disciplines certainly offer a framework for an assessment of scholarship. The effective use of scientific criteria and the attainment of this ideal of scientific objectivity is, however, clearly related to a context of political and intellectual pluralism, as is so dramatically revealed in the countries where interpretative frameworks for scientific research are, on the contrary, imposed from above. But even in a context where democratic institutions and long-standing traditions of academic freedom do exist, scientific research on the national question may become the subject of instrumentalization and mystification. Intellectuals' willingness to challenge existing scientific judgements and to revise their own opinions cannot be taken for granted. It can only result from a constant readiness to question both the intellectual premises on which scholarship rests, and the institutional frameworks within which it is exercised.

Notes

1 George Schöpflin, 'The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths', in Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin (eds), *Myths and Nationhood*, London, Hurst & Company, 1997, pp. 19-35, especially p. 23.

2 For example, the recent *Nieuwe Encyclopedie van de Vlaamse Beweging* (Tielt, Lannoo, 1998) has been distributed to all schools in Flanders (*De Morgen*, 20 November 1998, p. 4).

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[3] Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986, p. 172.

[4] Aleksandar Pavkovic, 'From Yugoslavism to Serbism: the Serb National Idea 1986-1996', *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1998, pp. 511-528, and especially p. 513.

[5] David Cameron, *Nationalism, Self-Determination and the Quebec Question*, Toronto, Macmillan of Canada, 1974, p. 117.

[6] Wendy Bracewell, 'National Histories and National Identities Among the Serbs and Croats', in Mary Fulbrook (ed.), *National Histories and European History*, London, UCL Press, 1993, pp. 141-160.

[7] Ted Schatzki, 'Objectivity and Rationality', in Wolfgang Natter, Theodore R. Schatzki and John Paul Jones (eds), *Objectivity and Its Other*, New York, The Guilford Press, 1995, pp. 137-60. See the contribution to this volume by Bruno Coppieters.

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