

TALKING UP THE NATION

A study into the relationship between
nationalist rhetoric and ideology

By

Koen Vanhoutte

Submitted to
Central European University
Nationalism Studies Program

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Advisor: Professor Anton Pelinka

Budapest, Hungary, 2008

Acknowledgements

In many ways this thesis represents the end of what has been an eventful and enriching year of study at the Central European University in Budapest. Hence, this is an apt place to express my gratitude to all those who made it possible for me to study here, and those who made this year the wonderful experience it was.

First of all, I would like to thank my family and friends back home. Their support has been an inspiration throughout my time at the University of Leuven and at CEU. I would like to thank my parents especially, for supporting me in every decision I made. Also, special thanks are in order for Gerrit, a dear friend and wonderful person; and for Rob, an old friend I got to know even better over the summer.

This year would not have been the year it was without all the inspiring people at the Nationalism Department. Their ideas and personalities motivated me and their warm friendship has propelled me through some of the more difficult times this year. Special gratitude is also in order for all the professors and visiting professors at the department. In particular, I would like to thank Anton Pelinka, my thesis adviser, and Maria Kovács, the head of the program. Furthermore, I would like to thank Rogers Brubaker for his helpful remarks in the thesis workshop, and Jon Fox for commenting on my ideas and suggesting some novel angles.

Last but not least, a special kind of thank you is in order for Tara, who inspired me, made me laugh, and was always there for me in times of need.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	1
Table of contents.....	2
Introduction	3
Chapter One: The Puzzle that is nationalist rhetoric	6
The cultural reproduction of the nation: the Grand Theory debate	7
Ideology and rhetoric: what do the Siamese twins look like?	10
<i>The bottom-up aspect of ideology: the salience of rhetoric</i>	13
The reproduction of the nation: nationalist ideology and rhetoric	19
<i>Nationalist ideology and rhetoric in established nations: fringe or core?</i>	19
<i>Banal and hot nationalism</i>	21
<i>A ‘rhetorical approach’ to nationalist rhetoric</i>	24
Chapter Two: Nationalism and patriotism in the United States.....	28
The origins and features of the American nation	28
Nationalism and patriotism in an established nation	31
The monopolisation of patriotism and nationalism	36
Chapter Three: Case study:	
Nationalist interpretations framing the events of September the 11th, 2001	38
The selection of the case study	39
The Bush administration’s nationalist framing of the events.....	40
<i>Nationalist rhetoric in the Bush administration’s early response</i>	40
<i>The seeds of monopolisation?</i>	43
Nationalist counter-rhetoric: challenging the government’s nationalist rhetoric	45
Conclusion	49
Bibliography	52

Introduction

Given enough time, nothing is more changeable than rock

— Enos Mills —

Confronted with the vastness of the Grand Canyon, the interested visitor learns that the spectacle unfolding in front of him, the massive sculptures of rock, are the patient work of wind, water, earth quakes and land slides. It is hard to conceive that the vast rocks, seemingly monuments of stability, are in fact in a state of continuous flux. To be sure, this change is slow, and invisible to the untrained eye. Nevertheless, every day the Grand Canyon changes, bit by bit. The passer-by, in awe of what appears to be an exhibition of timelessness, is unaware of the massive changes occurring over centuries and millennia.

Nations, the dominant form of political organisation in the modern age, are much the same. They too, to the untrained eye, seem to be examples of stability. Often they are regarded as the rocks on which society is built. But these rocks, like the ones in the Grand Canyon, immobile and robust they might look, are in fact in continuous flux. Unlike rock, however, nations do not exist as such in the natural world. Rather they are a product of culture, the outcome of human and societal thinking process. Nations are the result of ideology.

Nationalism is this ideology behind the nation. It is a system of widely held beliefs to which its members subscribe. It is a set of unchallenged assumptions about the nature and naturalness of the nation they live in. These beliefs bring a factor of stability into the modern national society. They engender a feeling of togetherness among its members. At the same time they set every particular nation apart from other nations or alternative political communities. Nationalisms have bright sides, and dark sides. They can be a mechanism of inclusion and cohesion, as well as a mechanism of exclusion and contention.

Neither nations, nor nationalisms are constant. As they are products of culture, they must be continuously reproduced to uphold their position in society. Furthermore, nationalist ideologies are never homogeneous sets of beliefs. An ideology is not set in stone. Rather it is the incessantly shifting outcome of a dynamic discussion between opposing interpretations about what the nation is: who are its members? Who speaks for the nation? What is its purpose and mission? And what threatens it? Nationalist rhetoric is the cornerstone of this everlasting discussion. Every nationalist rhetorical utterance represents an argument in this debate. It is an attempt by an orator to convince his/her audience of the salience and strength of his/her interpretation of the nation.

In the present essay I will investigate in depth the relationship between nationalist rhetoric and ideology. The scope of this thesis is predominantly theoretical. Employing existing literature on rhetoric and (nationalist) ideology, I shall attempt to draw as lucid a picture of what is nationalist rhetoric as possible. The objective is to get a clear insight into how nationalist rhetoric operates, and how it relates to nationalist ideology. I hope to convince the reader that the study of nationalist rhetoric is essential in understanding nationalist ideology. The main argument running through this essay, is that a better understanding of (nationalist) rhetoric will engender a richer comprehension of (nationalist) ideology.

The lion's share of this dissertation is theoretical. The first chapter in particular explores theoretical writings on rhetoric, ideology and nationalism. Additionally, the question I seek to answer is about the role of rhetoric in the process of continuous reproduction of nationalism. It is not my intention to investigate the equally important and interesting question of why some nationalist rhetoric is successful and why others are not. In the second chapter, in preparation of a short case study, I will elaborate on the origins and features of American nationalism and patriotism. Apart from its utility in the face of the case study, this chapter gives an opportunity to dig deeper into the concepts of nationalist ideology outlined in the

first chapter. The third and final chapter presents a brief case study on the initial responses of the Bush administration and a left-wing periodical (*The Nation*) on the dramatic events of September 11, 2001. The case must be read as an illustration rather than conclusive proof validating or falsifying the argument developed in the previous chapter. This chapter, therefore, is an initial test for the argument I will put forward. Also, it is a vehicle to make the theoretical discussion more tangible.

Chapter One: The Puzzle that is nationalist rhetoric

As with many ‘attributes of the nation’, it is hard to come up with a fitting definition of *nationalist rhetoric*. This task becomes even more challenging taking into account the fact that both its components, *nationalist* and *rhetoric*, do not have clear-cut definitions themselves. Thinking about the concept of nationalist rhetoric, however challenging it may be, is a useful exercise. Often the meaning of nationalist rhetoric is not deemed problematic. It is often taken for granted that we know nationalist rhetoric when we see it. Furthermore, it is often assumed that nationalist rhetoric is only used by hard-wingers or – on the seldom occasion it is used by mainstream politicians – it is solely employed in times of political crisis or in the fever of electoral campaigns.

The present chapter is not an attempt to come to a comprehensive definition of nationalist rhetoric. However, I will attempt to bring together a number of theories on nationalism and rhetoric in such a way that it will clarify the phenomenon. The objective of this chapter is threefold. First, I will argue that the study of (nationalist) rhetoric – and by that I mean persuasive discourse – is intrinsically connected to the analysis of (nationalist) ideology. Secondly, and closely related to the first objective, I will contend that rhetoric is not simply the linguistic reflection of a dominant ideology. More accurately rhetorical utterances from the dominant political elites as well as the ‘counter-rhetoric’ it induces from non-dominant political groups *create* the ideology, rather than *mirroring* it. Finally, I shall assert that, since every faction in society takes part in the rhetorical construction of a (nationalist) ideology, much of the persuasive discourse in a modern political society holds a (nationalist) ideological element.

The cultural reproduction of the nation: the Grand Theory debate

Many theorists of nationalism have elaborated on the central importance of cultural reproduction of nationalism. It is widely acknowledged that for the nation (and nationalism) to safeguard its pre-eminent position in the modern people's mind, it needs to be continuously reproduced. There is, however, a contentious academic debate about how exactly the nation is reproduced, and what this cultural reproduction tells us about modern day nationalism. Moreover, it is unclear in how far cultural reproduction can be thought to be a truly independent variable in the (re)creation of the nation. In other words, although it is widely believed that cultural (re)production plays a considerable role in the continuous process of nation-building, it is rather doubtful that this cultural reproduction is only dependent upon the desires of a hegemonic societal group. Surely, there are more factors in play than mere elitist manipulation that define the course that the process of cultural (re)production takes.

Elie Kedouri is one of the most vigorous proponents of the idea that nationalism is a modern cultural artefact. The opening sentence in the first chapter ("Politics in a new style") of his oft-cited work *Nationalism* is an illustration in point:

"Nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It pretends to supply a criterion for the determination of the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively its own, for the legitimate exercise of power in the state, and for the right organisation of a society of states."¹

Kedouri's understanding of nationalism is thus very instrumentalist in nature. He traces the rise of nationalism back to the enlightened philosophy and the specific historical environment of the early nineteenth century, which constituted new challenges for European polities.² The response to this new environment, then, was the invention of a concealing doctrine that (successfully) 'pretends' to answer why political power is concentrated in the nation.

¹ E. KEDOURI, *Nationalism*, London: Hutchinson, 1966, p.1.

² Ibid., p.2.

In a similar way, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger point to the fact that the nation is a modern “innovation”, or “an exercise of social engineering”. They, too, have a strong instrumentalist approach to the emergence of the nation and its associated phenomena. Hobsbawm and Ranger argue that the constitutive elements of the nation are predominantly “invented traditions”, emerging out of a specific historical development: the rapid political mobilisation of the masses in the late nineteenth century.³ In turn, Benedict Anderson, in his seminal work *Imagined Communities*, finds that the nation is the product of collective imagination of a political community that is “inherently limited and sovereign”.⁴ Anderson finds that the seeds for nationalism (meaning the predominance of the idea of the nation constituting the basis for political life) are to be found in the convergence of two processes: the withering influence of the old and sacred institutions of the *Ancien Régime* on the one hand, and the ascendance of a new manner of conceiving society, on the other hand.⁵ The imagination of this new style of (political) community, Anderson argues, was only made possible by technological innovations that enabled the mass reproduction and dissemination of cultural artefacts (starting with the printing press).

Anthony Smith, in a response to some of the above theories, points to a problematic implication. He asks:

“If nationalism is primarily a tool of political interests, what of the nation? Can it too be understood in Marxian terms: as the site and language of political and class interests and aspirations? Can we not analyse its appeal and stability in terms of the interests and social needs it serves?”⁶

Smith argues that the role of political and social elites is far less spectacular than the above authors seem to suggest. He argues – using the example of the Polish nation – “without the heritage of pre-modern ethnic ties (memories, myths, traditions, rituals, symbols, artefacts,

³ E. HOBBSBAWM and T. RANGER, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 13-14.

⁴ ANDERSON, B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised Edition), London: Verso, 1991, pp. 6-7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24.

⁶ A.D. SMITH, “The Nation: invented, imagined, reconstructed?” in: *Reimagining the Nation*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993, p 11.

etc.) [...] the modern ‘re-construction’ of the [...] nation is inconceivable.”⁷ In other words, Smith contends that nationalist ideology cannot be solely an “invention” or “imagination”, since this cannot account for the strong position nationalist ideology holds in most (if not all) modern political societies.

Now, the question is, to what extent can political and social elites shape the nation. This discussion has not only relevance for the study of the emergence of new nationalisms, but has also an application in the study of nationalist ideology in established nations. If, to some extent, the nation is a cultural artefact, susceptible to at least some degree of elite-manipulation, in how far can established nations today be moulded in the hands of governmental, political and/or social elites? Furthermore, nationalism is the ideology that is fundamental to all modern politics. Even though nationalism is sometimes hard to detect, it does make up the core of every modern (political) society. In this respect, James Mayall notes that:

“except to a handful of scholars, nationalism is not a problem; rather national sentiment is so pervasive and self-evident that it has become invisible.”⁸

Thus, the nation is a collective entity, with most of its members perceiving it as ‘natural’, meaning that every particular nation is generally believed to exist in the natural world. The common approach to the nation is that it is not simply a cultural product, but that it is an independent factor in modern life. In this sense Michael Billig speaks of the “double neglect of banal nationalism” in established nations. On the one hand members of established nations digest and reproduce nationalist symbols without noticing them. On the other hand, academics fail to scrutinise this process of unconscious reproduction of the nation.⁹ Further on we shall investigate Billig’s theory more closely. What is important for our argument here, however, is the insight that nationalist ideology is all-pervasive and most of the time unnoticed. Often, the

⁷ A.D. SMITH, *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸ J. MAYALL, *Nationalism and international society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 25.

⁹ M. BILLIG, *Banal Nationalism*, London: Sage, 1995, pp. 49-50.

postulation about the nation's naturalness is not made explicit.¹⁰ Rather, it operates as an invisible assumption for politics, policy, journalism, academic analysis, etc.¹¹ As such nationalist ideologies are the underlying factor for much of the important debates that occur in modern polities.

Therefore, the nation, rather than a natural category, is the outcome of a continuous process of reproduction. The nation, a cornerstone of modern politics, is in fact a product of ideology and thus – by definition – is subject to change. The continuous process of reproduction of the nation, however, safeguards the central position of the nationalist ideology and thus brings an element of stability into modern politics. This essay will deal in detail with one aspect of the continuous reproduction of the nation, namely nationalist rhetoric. The aim of our analysis is to bring greater insight into what nationalist rhetoric is, and how it affects the widely held dogmas about the naturalness of the nation.

Ideology and rhetoric: what do the Siamese twins look like?

Before we turn our attention to the particular discussion of nationalist ideology and rhetoric, it is useful to first devote some space to clarifying the concepts that will lie at the core of our argument. This section will clarify how our interpretation of 'ideology', and how it influences our understanding of rhetoric. In other words, it will become clear that the way we comprehend the notion 'ideology' will determine how we view 'rhetoric'. The insights we collect in the present section will help us to develop a clearer picture of what 'nationalist rhetoric' is further on. The core assumption is that there is an important overlap between the

¹⁰ R. BRUBAKER, "In the name of the nation: Reflections on Nationalism and Patriotism" in: *Citizenship Studies*, no. 2 (2004): 8, pp. 116-118.

¹¹ CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE, *Draft Report on 'Workshop on Methodological Nationalism'*, London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2002 (www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Yearbook/methnatreport.htm).

theory of ideology on the one hand and the concept of rhetoric on the other.¹² In a way they are like Siamese twins, in that it is hard, or even futile, to examine the one without investigating the other.

The term ‘rhetoric’ has a number of meanings. Often it is used as a derogative word, indicating the insincere use of persuasive discourse. In the present essay I shall not use the term rhetoric as a synonym for the dishonest use of language. Essential in use of ‘rhetoric’ here, regardless of whether it is an honest or dishonest utterance, is its *persuasive* nature. Thus, I will use rhetoric as a synonym for persuasive discourse. There are many ways in which a speaker or writer can sway his/her audience and convince them to follow the ideas he/she puts forward. The study of the use of rhetoric is age-old and was codified most notably in Ancient Greece and the Roman Empire.¹³ It is not our purpose to go into much detail here. Important for the present argument is that *common sense* has always been considered to play an important part in rhetoric.¹⁴ Common sense is a set of widely held beliefs about the social world which are used in social interactions without being questioned. Every society has a wide array of beliefs that are commonsensical. The invocation and manipulation of common-sense beliefs is an effective rhetorical strategy.¹⁵ It awards the orator with leverage since his/her case is framed in a set of widely accepted beliefs.

Not all common-sense beliefs have to be ideological in nature. However, a dominant ideology can only maintain its position in society if the core components of the ideological belief system are part of the realm of common sense. To understand rhetoric one needs to understand common-sense beliefs (in this case of an ideological nature). It is through rhetoric that ‘ideological common sense’ is continuously nurtured and altered. In this essay we shall use the terminology introduced by Michael Billig. However, there have been studies of the

¹² M. BILLIG, *Ideology and opinions: Studies in rhetorical psychology*, London: Sage, 1991.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 22-26.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 72.

¹⁵ R. BRUBAKER, Ibid., p. 118 [with regard to references to the nation].

same or similar phenomena that used a different terminology. For instance, Daniel Bar-Tal, in his book *Shared Beliefs in a Society*, defines ‘societal beliefs’ as “enduring beliefs shared by society members, with contents that are perceived by society members as characterising their society”.¹⁶ His discussion of ‘societal beliefs’ overlaps in a significant manner with Billig’s interpretation of ‘common sense’.

The top-down aspect of ideology: rhetoric as a mirror of power relations?

The study of ideology owes a great deal to the Marxist tradition of social sciences. The term ‘ideology’ was born in the context of the French Revolution¹⁷, but its development entered into a decisive stage only in the mid-nineteenth century. Marx and Engels in 1846 published a groundbreaking piece, entitled *The German Ideology*, arguing that ‘ideology’ was a system of widely held ideas, preventing the mass population to see the exploitative nature of the capitalist society they were part of.¹⁸ In Marx and Engels’ interpretation, ideology is a set of tools in the hands of the ruling elites to control and exploit the masses. Ideology helps masking the exploitative and unbalanced relations that constitute a capitalist society and thus aids the perpetuation of this abusive system of social relations. One of the tools in the ‘ideological toolbox’ is rhetoric. As the ruling elites often control and sometimes own the means to effectively disseminate ideological rhetoric, they can control to at least some extent the ideas circulating in a political society. Michael Billig, expanding Marx and Engels’ understanding of ideology, suggests that:

“it might be claimed that, in every age, the ruling class possesses the ruling rhetoric, and that the ownership of the means of production is the ownership of the means of persuasive [sic] rhetoric. This

¹⁶ D. BAR-TAL, *Shared Beliefs in a Society: Social psychological analysis*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2000, p. 39.

¹⁷ E. KENNEDY, *A ‘Philosophe’ in the Age of Revolution: Destutt de Tracy and the Origins of ‘Ideology’*, Philadelphia (PA): American Philosophical Society, 1978.

¹⁸ M. BILLIG, *Ideology and opinions*, p. 3.

ownership enables the ruling classes to present its messages persuasively, regardless of truth and falsity.”¹⁹

However, the early Marxist interpretation of ideology, as well as the understanding of rhetoric that could be attributed to it, creates a problem which becomes visible when one considers the alternatives for any hegemonic ideology. The questions that arise are these: can a society, dominated by a certain ideology, be transformed into an ideology-free society? Or does the defeat of one ideology invariably imply the rise of one or more alternative ideologies? It is impossible to definitively prove or disprove one hypothesis or the other. However, it is hard to conceive a modern society in which ideology does not play a role. Furthermore, although there have been a considerable number of societies in the last few decades shaking off their hegemonic ideology²⁰, there is no instance of a society turning ‘ideology-free’.

Although the evidence is episodic and therefore inconclusive, this thought experiment can point to an important defect in the early Marxist theory of ‘ideology’. The theory assumes that ideology only serves the ruling elites, and that the masses only follow the storyline dictated by these elites, because they are trapped in the hegemonic interpretation of their society. Although ideology certainly can have this effect on the masses and even though it can be a highly effective tool of elite domination, this is only part of what ideology is.

The bottom-up aspect of ideology: the salience of rhetoric

The other side of the coin is that an ideology, for it to obtain a prominent place in a political society and to maintain this position, it needs to be continuously reproduced. Dominant interpretations of social life can only survive if they are reproduced at all levels of

¹⁹ M. BILLIG, *Ideology and opinions*, p. 4.

²⁰ Think of many of the newly independent countries of the Former Soviet Union, or the transformations in the countries of the former Warsaw Pact.

political society. Furthermore, one should not take for granted that the population at large will absorb any kind of ideological rhetoric. This would be underestimating the complex interplay between elites and the mass population.²¹ Ideology is not simply the imposition of a certain set of ideas by one group on the other. Rather, society as a whole continuously reproduces the dominant ideology.

The image that arises is that of a ‘thinking society’²², rather than an ‘absorbing society’. Evidently society itself does not do the thinking. More accurately it is the thinking process, the internal dialogue within society, moulding the ideology that is dominant in it.²³ To understand a particular ideology, it is therefore important to investigate not only the ruling ideas, but also those countering these ideas. Not only the dictation from above matters, also the way in which certain ideas are accepted, altered or rejected by (a portion of) society matters. Without this facet, one does not see the whole picture.

This insight is radically different from the early Marxist one, in that it does not simply assume the mindless reception of ideological projects by the population at large. Additionally, this markedly different conception of ideology demands a different view on rhetoric. Rather than simply being a reflection of ideology, rhetoric must now be understood as a constitutive element of ideology. Rhetorical texts shape ideology, rather than mimicking them. Ideologies, though often rigid, are not set in stone. The strength of the rhetorical approach to ideology is that it explains both this rigidity and changeability.

Every rhetorical utterance, indeed every use of language is part repetition and part innovation. Thus, the orator is both master and slave over ideological concepts in the language he/she uses.²⁴ On the one hand speakers and writers can choose which concepts they

²¹ M. BILLIG, *Ideology and opinions*, pp. 4-5.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 8-13.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-76.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p 8.

will retain in their message and they can even alter concepts to fit their purposes. On the other hand the orator's degree of liberty is limited. Michael Billig observes that:

“As slaves, speakers are condemned to recycle concepts, which function behind their backs, or rather, through their larynxes. On the other hand, the speaker is the master of language: to speak is to assert the self, and the speaker is the hero who creates patterns of discourse, which have never been uttered before.”²⁵

There are two reasons why all of us, and orators in particular, have to – to some extent at least – **recycle** pre-existing (and often dominant) ideological concepts. First, to make ourselves understandable and to appeal to others, we often resort to set phrases and commonsensical beliefs. Especially in the case of persuasive communication one can see the advantages of using familiar language and common sense to win over the audience. To some level at least every orator is condemned to use clichés. It is to be expected that this need to rely on commonsensical beliefs will increase with the size and heterogeneity of the audience. After all, to appeal to the public the speaker or writer will ideally have to use references to commonsensical beliefs that are held by all those in the audience. The highest denominator between the listeners or readers will decrease as a result of an increase in their numbers and internal diversity. As political rhetoric is typically employed to persuade large numbers of people, often the population of entire countries, and because these groups tend to be reasonably heterogeneous, the degree of liberty of the orator is considerably limited.

Secondly, walking on treaded rhetorical paths can generate a considerable pay-back for the orator. The invocation of (ideological) commonsensical beliefs is generally thought to reflect well on the message that the orator is presenting, or on the person himself/herself. An excerpt from Harry G. Frankfurt's essay *On Bullshit* can illustrate this point. He writes:

“Consider a Fourth of July orator, who goes on bombastically about “our great and blessed country, whose Founding Fathers under divine guidance created a new beginning for mankind.” [...] But the orator does not really care what his audience thinks about the Founding Fathers, or about the role of the

²⁵ M. BILLIG, *Ideology and opinions*, pp. 8-9.

deity in our country's history or the like. At least it is not an interest in what anyone thinks about these matters that motivates his speech [... T]he orator intends these statements to convey a certain impression of himself. [...] He wants them to think of him as a patriot [...]"²⁶

Frankfurt's argument is that the essence of bullshit is not the falsity of the message, but the general disinterest with the question whether or not the message is valid. Thus, rather than conveying true or false claims, the intention of the orator lies elsewhere. Furthermore, Frankfurt contends that this way of speaking (the frequent use of bullshit) is "one of the most salient features of our culture".²⁷

Even though the orator is seemingly condemned to recycle existing phrases and concepts, he/she still enjoys a considerable degree of freedom. Speaking and writing in general, and the usage of rhetoric in particular are always an act of **creativity**. It is an exercise in combining words in a novel way so as to express a feeling, a conviction or to transfer information.²⁸ I have discussed above that the orator will be inclined to use fixed ideological concepts for he/she will attempt to appeal to as wide a faction of the audience as possible. The usage of these fixed concepts, however, does not exclude creativity; in fact, it *implies* creativity on the part of the orator.

To clarify this point, it is useful to introduce the notion of *anchoring*. Commonsensical beliefs are ready-made representations of the (social) world which have been successfully 'anchored' in society. The term anchoring points to the mechanism making a social representation familiar, frames it into a pre-existing and recognizable context.²⁹ As unfamiliar things (be it objects or ideas) are threatening, anchoring reduces this threat. Anchoring then "is the mechanism for reducing this threat by imposing familiar classifications".³⁰ To maintain their effect, common-sense beliefs have to remain anchored in society. This implies that the

²⁶ H. G. FRANKFURT, *On Bullshit*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, pp. 16-18.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁸ M. BILLIG, *Ideology and opinions*, pp. 8-9.

²⁹ S. MOSCOVICI, "The phenomenon of social representations", in: *Social Representations*, R.M. FARR and S. MOSCOVICI (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 29; M. BILLIG, *Ideology and opinions*, p. 63.

³⁰ M. BILLIG, *Ideology and opinions*, p. 64.

‘anchor’ of a particular piece of common sense must be dropped with certain intervals. If this does not happen, then this particular instance of common sense will wither away, it will no longer be ‘common’, at least not to a large section of the population. From this follows that while the mechanism of anchoring draws large numbers of people into the gravity field of a certain set of commonsensical beliefs, these representations’ reproduction (and hence ‘survival’) is entirely dependent upon human will.³¹

So, what then moves orators to drop these anchors? The answer to this question is simple: ‘rhetorical gain’. As I have stated above, if the orator can successfully show that his/her argument correlates with a widely held belief, then his/her claims will gain leverage. Not every argument, however, sits well with every common sense belief. The task of the orator then is to select a set of common sense that serve his/her argument best. He/she will lower only the anchors of commonsensical beliefs that will further his/her argument. Furthermore, also the raising of anchors might be a valuable rhetorical strategy. Since rhetoric will be used almost invariably in a context of political contention (persuasion is not likely to be necessary if there is not at least one alternative viewpoint), it is evident that raising the anchors of a common-sense belief employed by an opponent will further the effectiveness of one’s own argument.

Therefore, rhetoric is the motor behind the continuous reproduction of ideological common-sense beliefs.³² It is of the highest importance to note here that the rhetoric must not be ‘ideological’ in the strict sense. It is not a requirement for the orator to pursue the maintenance or enhancement of the ideology in question per se. The cost and benefit structure of the usage of common sense is a sufficient force to maintain certain ideological beliefs;

³¹ D. JODELET, “Représentation sociale: phénomène, concept et théorie” in: *Psychologie Sociale*, S. MOSCOVICI (ed.), Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1984, p. 372 ; M. BILLIG, Ibid, p. 64

³² Bar-Tal makes a similar argument with regard to his concept of ‘societal beliefs’; D. BAR-TAL, *Shared Beliefs in a Society*, p. 71.

“Common-sense, or rhetorical, thinking involves the raising and dropping of anchors. This raising and lowering of anchors will provide the argumentative forms for the debates, whose content may be provided by the contrary themes of the *sensus communis*.” [italics in original]³³

It is even entirely possible that the orator pursues a certain ideological belief, strengthens its role in society through his/her words, without him/her being aware of the fact that he/she is doing such a thing. Here it is helpful to point at the conception of *strategy* proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. He argues that a strategy can be pursued without the person being aware he/she is doing so. It is not necessary that a strategic goal is pursued consciously. Every strategy aims at a goal, but this goal must not necessarily be known by those fulfilling the strategic action.³⁴

In Bourdieu’s own words:

“the principle of philosophical (or literary) strategies is not cynical calculation, the conscious pursuit of maximum specific profit [...] The strategies I am talking about are actions objectively oriented towards goals that may not be the goals subjectively pursued.”³⁵

Thus, ideological rhetoric can very well enhance the position of an ideology without the orator intending to do so. This observation about the irrelevance of intentionality will reappear further on in our argument.

Up to this point we have established that the phenomena of rhetoric and ideology are closely related to one another. There is a very strong theoretical connection between the two. I have elaborated on how *ideological commonsensical beliefs* are instrumental for any orator, making his case. But the relation between rhetoric and ideology works both ways. We have also established that rhetoric is an important building bloc for an ideology. Political contention, expressed in contrary rhetoric, is the source for an ideology. Ideology, therefore, is a dynamic phenomenon, and its propelling force is political debate.

³³ M. BILLIG, *Ideology and opinions*, p. 74.

³⁴ R. WODAK, R. DE CILLIA, M. REISIGL and K. LIEBHART, *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* [translated by A. HIRSCH and R. MITTEN], Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, pp. 31-32.

³⁵ Quoted in R. WODAK et al., *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Not all rhetoric is necessarily ideological. Since not all common-sense beliefs are ideological, it is entirely possible that an orator uses a set of beliefs, widely held by his/her audience, which cannot be connected to a certain ideology. However, the larger the audience, the more likely it is the orator will use ideological common sense in his/her rhetoric. The highest denominator is likely to decrease within an audience as it grows, thus rendering commonsensical beliefs that are more pervasive in society more instrumental, compared to the other alternatives. From this deduction, it is to be expected that although not all rhetoric is ideological, most rhetoric reaching a heterogeneous and large audience is.

The reproduction of the nation: nationalist ideology and rhetoric

Nationalist ideology and rhetoric in established nations: fringe or core?

Previously in this chapter I have shown that the concepts of ideology and rhetoric are closely intertwined. I argued that our interpretation of ideology will reflect on our understanding of rhetoric and vice versa. Therefore, attempting to shed light on the phenomenon of nationalist rhetoric, it is important to first make some clarifications on the subject of nationalist ideology. First, I shall touch upon the question whether one can treat nationalism as an ideology in its own right. Subsequently, introducing Michael Billig's typology of 'banal' and 'hot' nationalism, I will suggest a way to think about the role of nationalist ideology in established nations.

Some analysts of nationalist ideology have pointed to the fact that nationalism is a ‘philosophically poor’ ideology, when compared to other forms.³⁶ Nevertheless, it is widely accepted that, regardless of its seemingly shaky philosophical basis, most students of nationalism agree that it is an ideology in its own right with its own well-defined goals and common basic elements across the wide scale of particular nationalisms.³⁷ The function of nationalism, however, is different than that of other political ideologies. Rather than focussing on the ‘traditional’ topics of ideology like social justice and the (re)distribution of wealth, nationalist ideology is focused on the division of the social world into categories. Therefore, nationalism does not fulfil all the functions that ‘traditional’ ideologies (such as liberalism, socialism, conservatism and environmentalism) fulfil. Nationalism operates on another playing field. Hence, nationalism fills up the gap in other ideologies. At the same time nationalist ideology needs a host as nationalism in itself cannot provide answers for many of the questions facing modern societies.³⁸

Anthony Smith has isolated three *fundamental ideals* and six *core concepts* that he argues are distinctive of nationalist ideologies. The three fundamental ideals are:

- **national autonomy:** both *internal autonomy* (the nation as the sovereign) and *external autonomy* (freedom from powers and constraints outside of the nation);
- **national unity:** the absence of threatening divisions in the territorial, social and cultural sphere;
- and **national identity:** the development of a distinctive ‘national character’.³⁹

These fundamental ideals are all of a high level of abstraction and thus they will be hardly ever visible in political programmes and rhetoric.⁴⁰ The six core concepts, on the other hand, can be more readily observed in nationalist discourse. These six core concepts are:

³⁶ B. ANDERSON, *Ibid.*, p. 5; A.D. SMITH, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 21.

³⁷ A. D. SMITH, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, p. 21.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-24.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-28.

1. **authenticity**: opposing the genuine to the fake;
2. **continuity**: stability over time;
3. **dignity**: being valued for its authentic features, sometimes evolves into a superiority complex;
4. **destiny**: connecting a golden past with a bright present and/or future;
5. **attachment**: the display of the ‘love for the nation’, most notably to allude to self-sacrifice;
6. **homeland**: the entity that has to be safeguarded.⁴¹

These concepts can be best understood as leading motifs in nationalist discourse or as a set of themes which are interpreted ‘in a nationalist way’. Nationalist rhetoric, then, is the act of ‘lowering and raising anchors’ with regard to these motifs. The orator may play out the different aspect of the nationalist ideology. Indeed, strong contention may arise between different interpretations of the six core concepts. There are, however, different ways in which a rhetorical text might appeal to a nationalist ideology. Here, it is especially helpful to introduce Michael Billig’s typology of ‘banal’ and ‘hot’ nationalism.

Banal and hot nationalism

Michael Billig, in his book *Banal nationalism*, offers us an intriguing insight into what he sees as two different ways in which nationalist ideology can expose itself in society. He states that we are constantly reminded of the fact that we live in a particular nation because we incessantly encounter banal, yet very important markers of our national identity. In his phrasing ‘our’ identity is continuously “flagged”, often by the use of unimaginative clichés and vague references that remind us that we live in a (particular) nation. This phenomenon he

⁴⁰ A. D. SMITH, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, Ibid. pp. 24-28.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 28-33.

labels “banal nationalism” or “flagging the nation”.⁴² Billig goes on to identify another, more visible way in which we are reminded of our nation. This he calls “flag waving”, “playing the patriotic card”, or “hot nationalism”. Playing the patriotic card, he argues, is a political strategy to (re)gain political support and often incurs in times of political crisis.

Billig appears to suggest that banal and hot nationalism are related concepts in the sense that the former is an exercise for the latter. Banal nationalism is a constant reminder to ‘us’ that ‘we’ are first and foremost citizens of a particular nation, which prepares ‘us’ for an occasion when flag-waving is (deemed) necessary. In a way, then, banal nationalism is the maintenance of myths and presumptions, which are necessary to mobilise the nation when the need would occur. One could look at it in this way: imagine nationalist ideology as an irrigation system that is build to supply much-needed water to grow crops. In this analogy, the practice of banal nationalism makes sure that these canals are kept open, even when the water is not flowing and the lands are dry. It is, however, of the greatest importance that the irrigation system is operational when water is in fact needed, and the flood gates can be opened if it is deemed necessary.

Billig’s typology of “banal” and “hot” nationalism	
Banal nationalism	Hot nationalism
Flagging	Flag-waving
Unconscious	Conscious, political strategy
Unintentional	Intentional
Banal references to the nation	More elaborate claims about the nation

Source: own compilation on the basis of M. BILLIG, *Banal Nationalism*, London: Sage, 1995, pp. 37-51.

⁴² BILLIG, M., *Banal Nationalism*, London: Sage, 1995, p. 93.

According to Billig, flag-waving will be employed, mainly by politicians, when the political system is in some sort of crisis. This constitutes an instrumentalist understanding of the phenomenon of flag-waving. Billig claims that ‘hot nationalism’ can be explained as a more or less *conscious political strategy* to engender or repair political allegiance among the population at large, especially in times of crisis. In this sense, ‘hot nationalism’ is nothing more than a containment strategy or an attempt to put an advantageous spin on political events. The discrepancy between Billig’s notions of banal and hot nationalism is remarkable. The former, he argues, is all-pervasive in modern established nations. It is so common, that citizens of nation-states, as well as observers do not even notice this phenomenon anymore. Every person living in the nation unconsciously produces and consumes banal nationalist discourse, thus maintaining the insidious banal nationalist ideology. The latter, Billig suggests, is a tool in the hands of the political elites.

There are three problems with the suggestions Billig makes about the relationship between hot and banal nationalism. First, the examples Billig uses to illustrate his points about hot nationalism (or flag waving) are invariably taken from addresses delivered by members of the highest echelons of the political elites. Surely anyone, including those who are not involved in the government of a country or in party politics, can engage in flag-waving. The sheer imbalance in the selection of examples for banal and hot nationalism may create a false insight into the differences between the two. Secondly, there is a methodological problem with such conception of the difference between banal and hot nationalism. If the difference between the two is essentially whether or not the author *intends* to employ nationalist rhetoric, then this poses an insurmountable problem for the researcher. As it is impossible to climb into the head of the orator, it is impossible to guess his/her intentions. Furthermore, analysing speeches of top-politicians becomes even more problematic, considering they often are a compromise of a myriad of agendas and a wide range of actors

within the government. Finally, Billig's suggestions about the difference between hot and banal nationalism pose a theoretical problem. To illustrate my point, it is helpful to imagine the following situation. Picture a political strategist who read Billig's *Banal nationalism*, and advises his employer to intentionally use banal nationalist discourse, yet no form of hot nationalism. Whether or not this strategy would work is not relevant here. What is important is that what will be understood by a researcher as banal nationalism is in fact an intentional use of the nationalist ideology, and therefore hot nationalism. Therefore, neither the orator's *intention*, nor the *formal features* can be sufficient distinguishing factors to mark the difference between hot and banal nationalism.

One conclusion one could draw from these criticisms could be that the distinction between hot and banal nationalism is futile and that we should do away with this typology. However, the distinction between these two modes of nationalist ideology does seem to have its merits. I will turn now to a discussion on how this distinction is theoretically relevant and I will propose a different way to distinguish hot from banal nationalism, based upon a 'rhetorical approach' of nationalist ideology.

A 'rhetorical approach' to nationalist rhetoric

In conclusion to this chapter I shall suggest an interpretation of the notion of nationalist rhetoric and suggest a way to interpret the difference between banal and hot nationalism. An interesting elaboration in Billig's *Banal nationalism*, is his approach to national identity. He argues that national identity, like any other ideology, does not occur in a pure form in society, because not every member of a nation understands his/her membership in the same way. Rather, national identity is continuously debated, and interpretations of the national identity gain and lose salience over time. However, Billig stated that this debate

occurs not in a vacuum and that disputes about what constitutes the ‘true’ national identity are always set against the background of banal nationalism.⁴³ Here we can see the echo of Billig’s ‘rhetorical approach’ to ideology I have discussed above.

Although he does not use the same terms, Rogers Brubaker alludes to the merits of exactly such a ‘rhetorical approach’ to the study of nationalism. Conceding that the study into what is the essence of the nation is very relevant, he proposes an alternative approach to the study of nationalism. Brubaker writes:

“I want to ask a somewhat different question: ‘how does the category “nation” work?’ Putting the question this way displaces our everyday understanding of nations as collectivities, entities, communities; it suggests that we should start instead by considering ‘nation’ as a category, a term, and nationalism as a particular language, a political idiom, a way of using that word or category [...] If we understand nationhood not as fact but as claim, then we can see that ‘nation’ is not a purely analytical category. It is not used to describe a world that exists independently of the language used to describe it. It is used, rather, to change the world, to change the way people see themselves, to mobilise loyalties, kindle energies, and articulate demands.”⁴⁴

Thus, nationalist rhetoric, the act of lowering and raising ‘national anchors’, is essential to the existence and maintenance of nationalist ideology. It is not, as it is often suggested, a (malignant) by-product of nationalism.⁴⁵

The above discussion of the operation of rhetoric and its close ties to the notion of ideology holds a promising solution for the problem of the distinction between hot and banal nationalism. The key, I suggest, lies in the analytical shift from the orator to his/her audience. More relevant than the intention of the orator is the audience’s reception of a rhetorical text. **Banal nationalism** can be used as a descriptor of the set of ‘national anchors’ that do not provoke any response of the audience. They are the commonsensical beliefs or common phrases about the nation that are taken for granted, both by the orator and his/her audience.

⁴³ M. BILLIG, *Banal nationalism*, p. 87.

⁴⁴ R. BRUBAKER, *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁴⁵ See for instance A. D. SMITH, *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, p. 21: “But there is more to [nationalism] than mere sentiment and rhetoric [...]”.

Hot nationalism on the other hand, can be used as a name for the set of rhetorical utterances inciting a response in the audience. Hot nationalism is therefore the reflection of the thinking process within a national society. Hot nationalist rhetoric is the lowering or raising of ‘national anchors’ in the context of a debate within society about what the nation is or should be. Thus, banal nationalism can be understood as a core of commonsensical beliefs about the nation.⁴⁶ These core common-sense beliefs remain unquestioned; they are unconsciously absorbed by the audience. Hot nationalist interpretations, on the other hand, orbit around this ‘banal core’. Sometimes these interpretations are held by a large segment of the population, sometimes they are marginal. In our analogy: they can be represented by larger or smaller satellites circumnavigating the core. Furthermore, hot nationalist rhetoric can be more moderate or more extreme; thus circling in a closer or wider orbit around the core.

This approach to nationalist rhetoric has a number of advantages. First of all, it resolves the problems with Billig’s interpretation of the difference between banal and hot nationalism, as it shifts the analytical focus from the orator onto the audience. Secondly, it allows for a ‘dynamic’ analysis of nationalist rhetoric. A hot nationalist commonsensical belief can be absorbed into the banal nationalist core. Similarly, parts of the banal nationalist core may break off and become satellites orbiting the remaining core. Furthermore, one hot nationalist interpretation might collide with another one and end up ‘absorbing’ the other in the heat of the impact. Finally, there are two sources of change in the system of nationalist ideology. On the one hand, the dynamics of the rhetorical contention itself can bring about a change in the nationalist ideology. This is the strategic goal (conscious or unconscious, calculated or unintentional) of nationalist rhetoric. On the other hand, a nationalist ideology might change as a result of (abrupt or gradual) changes in the political environment.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Bar-Tal, in his analysis of ‘societal beliefs’ points out that there is a set of “central and fundamental societal beliefs that constitute a societal ethos”; D. BAR-TAL, *Shared Beliefs in a Society*, p. 72.

⁴⁷ D. BAR-TAL, *Shared Beliefs in a Society*, pp. 69-72.

The above observations about nationalist rhetoric were arrived at through the study of the notions of ideology and rhetoric. It still remains to be proven whether or not the proposed interpretation of nationalist rhetoric has enough explanatory power. I shall make a first step into this direction with a short case study on nationalist rhetoric produced by the American ‘critical left’ in the wake of the tragic events of September 11 2001. Before engaging in the discussion of the case study, however, it is useful briefly discuss the origins and features of the American nation and its nationalism.

Chapter Two: Nationalism and patriotism in the United States

The origins and features of the American nation

Many works have been dedicated to understanding the process that lead to the establishment of the American nation. One of the most insightful accounts, in my opinion, was written by Liah Greenfeld in her book *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*.⁴⁸ In this seminal work she treats the emergence of five modern nations: England, France, Russia, Germany and the United States. The strength of this publication lies in the fact that Greenfeld succeeds in bringing together these very different cases under one theoretical framework without falling into the trap of over-generalisation. Analysing the etymology of the word ‘nation’, she submits that modern nations have two aspects: a universalistic side and a particularistic one.⁴⁹ Greenfeld asserts that the early nationalism in England, the first nation in history (“God’s Firstborn”), was central to the emergence of the American nationalism some two centuries later.⁵⁰ The early English nationalism, still according to Greenfeld, was distinctly universalistic, with every man (not woman) living on English territory having access to membership of the English nation. The early English nationalism was based upon two key concepts: liberty and equality for all its members. The inclusive character of the early English nation, in combination with these two key concepts made the ‘first nation’ universalistic in nature. It was only later that a particularistic element emerged into the English national consciousness, excluding certain groups living on the English territory

⁴⁸ L. GREENFELD, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1992, pp. 399-484.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 3-12.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 403-422.

(people living on English territory) from certain rights.⁵¹ Interestingly, this happened at the time when relations between England and its American colonies started to deteriorate. Greenfeld argues that the American national identity, in the first ninety years of its existence, was in fact the continuation of the English universalistic national identity. In fact, the emergence of an American nationalism was a reaction against the process of ‘particularisation’ that was ongoing in the Motherland’s society. In the first decades of its existence, the American nation retained its universalistic nature. Only ninety years later, in the latter half of the nineteenth century and in the wake of the Civil War, a particularistic element became imminent in the American national consciousness.⁵²

To fully grasp the importance of this process of ‘particularisation’ one needs to understand the connection between the particularistic and universalistic interpretations aspects of nationalism. They are not so much antonyms, rather than interlinked facets of any nation. The fact is that universalistic ideals often do not sit well together. Sometimes they even contradict one another. Take for instance the two ideals **liberty** and **equality**, which are fundamental to the American national identity.⁵³ Most, if not all, people would agree that both of them are important principles in a society. Furthermore, most people will recognise that these principles limit on one another; for instance, anyone’s liberty stops then when it imperils someone else’s claims for equality. The problem is, however, that different people (or different factions in society) have different interpretations of these fundamental ideals and how they relate to one another. I would argue that the process of ‘particularisation’ of the nation occurs when this debate heats up. When the contention grows stronger, it becomes to

⁵¹ Ibid. pp. 399-403.

⁵² L. GREENFELD, Ibid., pp. 428-449; A. MUNSLOW, *Discourse and Culture: the creation of America, 1870-1920*, London: Routledge, 1992.

⁵³ L. GREENFELD, Ibid., pp. 406-409; S. M. LIPSET, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1979, p. 77; note that Lipset speaks of ‘achievement’ where Greenfeld speaks of ‘liberty’. These two notions, however, are conflated in the American national identity: liberty means that there will be no obstruction imposed on anyone on their path to full personal development.

motor behind this process. The salience of this paradoxical relationship between the key universalistic elements of the American nation has been described by Greenfeld in this way:

“The national commitment of America – to liberty and equality – remains the main source of social cohesion and the main stimulant of unrest in it. The rigidity of loyalty to these national ideals, as well as its laxity, endangers the nation; yet this loyalty preserves it [...] To be an American means to persevere in one’s loyalty to the ideals, in spite of the inescapable contradictions between them and reality and to accept reality without reconciling oneself to it.”⁵⁴

Seymour Lipset, in his book *The First New Nation*, points to another important ingredient in the early development of American nationalism: the **anti-colonial revolutionary nature** of the establishment of the United States. Lipset observes that the United States was the first nation to be established as the outcome of an anti-colonial revolution. He argues that this fact has strongly influenced the way in which the institutions and the national identity in the United States have developed over the course of its existence, traces of which still play an important role in today’s society.⁵⁵ The anti-colonial aspect inspired not only the adoption of the above mentioned universalistic ideals; it also inspired the United States’ orientation in the realm of international politics. The early diplomatic relations of the United States were almost invariably inspired by the ideals of non-alignment and neutralism.⁵⁶ For more than a century the United States conducted its international affairs on the basis of the Monroe Doctrine, which held an isolationist approach to international relations. This isolationism is instructive in the sense that it is an example of the ambiguous relationship between the United States and the European countries, England in particular. The American attitude towards the European countries can be characterised by a **mixture of deep respect and a distinct sense of moral superiority over the ‘Old World’**. It was this double feeling that inspired the Monroe Doctrine, and although after the First World War (and even more distinctly after the Second World War) the United States broke out of its isolationist diplomatic policies, the factors that

⁵⁴ L. GREENFELD, *Ibid.*, p. 484.

⁵⁵ S.M. LIPSET, *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

drove these policies – respect for other parts of the world, but at the same time a sense of moral superiority – remained. The different interpretations of the mission of the American nation in the world have always been a source of contention within the American society. These disagreements have flared up at different times, especially as a result of changes in the international environment. Recently, the reconfiguration of the power relations as a result of the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the disintegration of the Soviet Union (the United States' most significant Other for almost half a century) have incited such a vivid debate.⁵⁷ It could be argued that the events of September 11 and the responses to them have further reinvigorated this dispute.

A final aspect of the American nationalist ideology is a particular interpretation of the **freedom of religion**. Lipset argues that, due to the religious heterogeneity from its early history onwards, the American society has engendered a specific strategy of dealing with this religious diversity. All faiths are free to be practised in the United States, and no government (local, state or federal) can ever usurp this right. Therefore, no religion can be put before another, and hence no religion can be an official religion.⁵⁸ However, this is not to say that religion does not play an important part in American politics in general or the American nationalist ideology in particular.

Nationalism and patriotism in an established nation

The early history of the American nation undoubtedly sheds light on the current affairs in American political society. However, at the same time the process of maintenance that is critical to the survival of the nation has since induced change in the American nation. There is

⁵⁷ G. DIJKINK, *National Identity and Geopolitical Visions: Maps of pride and pain*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 59-71.

⁵⁸ S. M. LIPSET, *Ibid.*, pp. 79-98.

a tendency among observers of political society in established nations to downplay or even completely neglect the existence of a mainstream nationalist ideology in one's own society.⁵⁹

One could even argue that this state of affairs – the broad acceptance by the members of a national society of a core nationalist ideology – as the distinguishing factor between emerging and established societies. Hence, a nation is an established nation if certain facets of its underlying nationalist ideology are taken for granted and is never (or very rarely) questioned by its members.

The American nation is no exception to this rule. Many students of nationalism and patriotism have pointed to a 'homeland bias' when it comes to describing one's own nationalism or patriotism. In the United States in particular, academics and the population at large are reluctant to recognise that there is no such a thing as a core nationalist ideology constituting the basis of the American society. Instead, it is argued by some, it is patriotism – the love for the American homeland and its people – which provides social cohesion. Additionally, this patriotism, unlike nationalism, is often believed *not* to have a dark side. With regard to this understanding of patriotism Rogers Brubaker argues that:

“Some of those who defend [American] patriotism do so by distinguishing it from nationalism [...] Patriotism and nationalism are not things with fixed natures; they are highly flexible political languages, ways of framing political arguments by appealing to the *patria*, the fatherland, the country, the nation.”⁶⁰

To be sure, nationalism and patriotism – though they very often overlap in modern political societies – do not operate on the same level.⁶¹ Nationalism is an ideology, whereas patriotism is an attitude. Daniel Bar-Tal defines patriotism as “the attachment by group members to their group and the land in which it resides”.⁶² He goes on to point out that patriotism is a phenomenon that predates nationalism. Therefore, patriotism may occur without or separate

⁵⁹ M. BILLIG, *Banal Nationalism*, pp. 49-50; see also the first chapter.

⁶⁰ R. BRUBAKER, *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

⁶² D. BAR-TAL, “Introduction: Patriotism: Its Scope and Meaning” in: D. BAR-TAL and E. STAUB (eds.), *Patriotism in the Lives of Individuals and Nations*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1997, p. 2.

from a nationalist ideology.⁶³ In modern political societies, however, national patriotism is the most frequently occurring form of patriotism. Since the nation has grown out to be the dominant socio-political unit, the term patriotism became more and more connected to nationalism.⁶⁴ Thus nationalism and patriotism are two distinct phenomena. They are not, however, to be understood as oppositional, as they do not operate on the same level. Hence, as Brubaker asserts, the conception that nationalism is the malign side and patriotism the benign flip-side of the same coin is fundamentally flawed. Furthermore, patriotism has been shown to have a malign as well as a benign side itself.⁶⁵

Another common misconception about the American nation is that it cannot foster nationalism as there is no such thing as an American core ethnic community. Such claim is based upon a misconception about the nature of nationality and ethnicity. The underlying idea is that, since the American society has always been ethnically and nationally diverse, and since the United States is an 'immigrant society', it was impossible for a single American national identity to develop. However, such statement holds the false assumption that nationality and ethnicity are fixed categories. It asserts that no new national and/or ethnic communities can arise in a society. Many authors have in fact pointed out that the contrary is true and that there is ample evidence to suggest that the American nation (with a nationalist ideology to match) arose before the establishment of an independent American state, and was further developed in the early years of its existence.⁶⁶ The process of the establishment of the American nation has been accompanied by the emergence of a concurring nationalist ideology. In fact, the development of the American nation and its attributes (national identity, ideology) is considered to be an example of how a nationalist ideology can arise without the pre-

⁶³ D. BAR-TAL, "Introduction: Patriotism: Its Scope and Meaning", p. 3; D. BAR-TAL, *Shared Beliefs in a Society*, p. 74.

⁶⁴ H. SETON-WATSON, *Nations and States*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977; D. BAR-TAL, "The Monopolisation of Patriotism" in: D. BAR-TAL and E. STAUB (eds.), *Patriotism in the Lives of Individuals and Nations*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1997, p. 247.

⁶⁵ D. BAR-TAL, "The Monopolisation of Patriotism", pp. 249-250.

⁶⁶ S.M. LIPSET, *Ibid.*, pp. 61-98; L. GREENFELD, *Ibid.*, p. 23-24.

existence of a single associated ethnic community. In this respect, Liah Greenfeld observes that:

“Some populations have no ‘ethnic’ characteristics at all, though this is very unusual. The population of the United States of America, *the identity of which is unmistakably national* and which undoubtedly possesses a well-developed sense of uniqueness, is a case in point: it has no ‘ethnic characteristics’ because its population is not an ‘ethnic community’.” [my italics]⁶⁷

A few pages onwards she adds that:

“The American case illustrates the essential independence of nationality from geo-political and ethnic factors and underscores its conceptual, or *ideological*, nature.” [my italics]⁶⁸

Thus, although nationalist ideologies often feed on the collective memory of an ethnic community that outdates the nation, this does not appear to be a requirement. Therefore, the absence of a single American ethnic community does not exclude the emergence of a nationalist ideology.

Furthermore, Samuel Huntington argues that there was in fact a core ethnic community to which one can attribute the fundamental ideology of the American society. He argues against the common conception that labels the American society as an *immigrant society*, contending that this is only a half-truth. Often it is argued that the United States does not have an ethnic core as a result of the consecutive vast waves of immigration in every period of its existence. Huntington differs with this representation of American history and states that, although the extensive influx of new migrants at different times, the United States did have a core ethnic community shaping American society. He makes the case that:

“in its origins America was not a nation of immigrants, it was a society, or societies, of settlers who came to the New World in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Its origins as an Anglo-Protestant settler society have, more than anything else, profoundly and lastingly shaped American culture, institutions, historical development, and identity.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ L. GREENFELD, *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁶⁸ L. GREENFELD, *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶⁹ S.P. HUNTINGTON, *Who are we? America's Great Debate*, London: Free Press, 2005, p. 39.

Thus, Huntington argues that these groups of first settlers, can be considered the core ethnic community greatly influencing the later development of the American nation. The difference, he contends, between *settlers* and *immigrants* is that the former group will have a far more extensive impact on the society they move to than the latter. This is evident as settlers will build a new society from the ground up (though they are probably influenced by the worldviews and common sense beliefs they ‘inherited’ from the society they left). Different flows of immigration may well have had a considerable impact on the development of the American nation, but their impact – Huntington argues – is far less direct.⁷⁰ At the same time he does agree, however, that this ethnic component in the American nationalism slowly grew to be less and less salient in the American political life as a result of the exponential growth of immigration at different times in its history.⁷¹ I believe Huntington did touch upon an interesting point here, even though I believe body of evidence he puts forward is not sufficient to prove his point. In addition, as this publication was intended in part as a political statement, one should treat its content with caution.⁷² Nevertheless, Huntington raised an interesting question that should be further investigated. This, however, falls outside the scope of the present essay.

⁷⁰ S. P. HUNTINGTON, *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40; one could also argue that different immigration flows had a different impact on the American society. If we take the extend to which a designated group immigrants impacted the host society as the distinguishing factor, we could describe the American society as a set of concentric circles. The centre is made up by those connected to the settlers. The second circle is populated with immigrants from Europe. The third and last circle represents those immigrants coming from other places than Europe. The distinction between the first and second circle has grown ever less useful over the course of the American history and also the distinction with the third circle is starting to wane. Thus the role of the core ‘ethnic community’ has become less visible, yet still important.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

The monopolisation of patriotism and nationalism

Thus far in this chapter we have established that the key features of the American nationalist ideology root into the early stages of its establishment. We have identified that the notions of liberty and equality play a vital role. Furthermore there is a sense of moral superiority which we can trace back to the ambiguous attitudes the members of the early American nation had towards their European counterparts. Finally, we have established that the Anglo-Protestant cultural system was rooted deeply in the early history of the colonies and has had a lasting impact on the American society. These key aspects of the ‘American nationalist common sense’ do not have a fixed content. Quite the contrary: they are the subject of constant debate. The position and status of particular interpretations of these basic values continuously changes as a result of the dynamics of political debate and the effect of changes in the political environment. In the next chapter I shall discuss in more detail the process of rhetorical reproduction of the American nation in a particular instance and its significance for the American nationalist ideology, building upon the theoretical insights discussed in the first chapter.

Before turning to this analysis, however, I will devote a few paragraphs on the ‘rhetorical environment’ in which the reproduction of the nation occurs. I use the term *rhetorical environment* to denote a set of structural features influencing the dynamics of political rhetoric. It is the array of systemic rules having an impact on the internal dynamic of political debate, and therefore, they will potentially influence the outcome of rhetorical interactions. They could be seen as the structural features of the market of political rhetoric. The idea of using a market metaphor to describe the public debate about the different interpretations of key aspects of the nationalist ideology is not new. Monroe Price suggests the phrase “market for loyalties” to indicate the set of alliances that occur as a result of the

struggle for power and the loyalties of citizens. He asserts that “the market for loyalties is a mechanism for explaining the manner in which national identities move from collections of stories to allocations of power”.⁷³

The *rhetorical environment* determines to a certain extent how those engaging in political rhetoric will behave. Different actors have different positions in the environment. It is in the interest of every orator to influence these structural features as much as possible for them to play in their advantage. The extreme example of this natural inclination among groups of orators to dominate the public scene is the ‘monopolisation of (nationalist) rhetoric’. Daniel Bar-Tal has written about the “monopolisation of patriotism”, denoting the situation when a sub-group in a (national) society uses patriotic rhetoric as a mechanism of exclusion against other members of the in-group.⁷⁴ The monopolisation of patriotism is especially effective when it is employed by the governing elite. Bar-Tal cites a wide array of historical cases in which he finds this trend of monopolisation, ranging from totalitarian political systems like Fascist and Communist regimes, to oppressive regimes such as Shintoism in the Meiji Restoration Period in Japan and Peronist Argentina, or even established democracies such as the United States during the McCarthy campaign in the beginning of the 1950s.⁷⁵ Bar-Tal goes on to explain the utility of labelling an opponent-orator non-patriotic: (1) it can delegitimise the opponent and it can be used as an instrument of exclusion, (2) it may be employed to scapegoat the opponent, (3) it can be applied to establish ideological conformity, and (4) it may be exploited to bring about or strengthen a totalitarian system of government.⁷⁶

⁷³ M. PRICE, *Television: The Public Sphere and National Identity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 60.

⁷⁴ D. BAR-TAL, “The Monopolisation of Patriotism”, p. 250.

⁷⁵ D. BAR-TAL, “The Monopolisation of Patriotism”, pp. 250-257.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 257-265.

Chapter Three: Case study: Nationalist interpretations framing the events of September the 11th, 2001

The previous chapters were theoretical in nature; they were a compilation of existing literature and an exercise in deduction. The aim of these chapters was to shed a light on the concept of nationalist rhetoric and the features of the American nationalist ideology. In the present chapter I shall make a first attempt to apply the above insights to a particular case. The case in question deals with the early responses to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, when four commercial airliners were used by Islamic fundamentalist terrorists in a coordinated attack against targets on American soil. Our analysis will focus on the way these events were framed by two inherently different actors in the American political society: the White House administration and a leftist periodical (The Nation).

The analysis below is by no means sufficient to verify or falsify the conclusions reached from the literature study above. Hence, this is not the objective of this chapter. Rather, this is an initial test examining the utility of the rhetorical approach to nationalist ideology. The aim is not to come up with conclusive answers and generalisations (which would be premature considering the small scope of this case study), but to make the above argument more tangible and to give the above hypotheses more focus. Hence, it must be clear from the beginning that more analysis must be done to prove, disprove, and/or adapt the above hypotheses. This case-study is the first step in this process.

The selection of the case study

As the scope of the case study is rather limited, it is of the utmost importance to select a case that is likely to hold a maximum amount of information with regard to the insight from the previous chapters. The aim of the case is to illustrate the merits of the analytical shift from the orator to the audience in determining what is *banal* and what is *hot nationalism*. The assertion is that hot nationalist claims, unlike their banal nationalist counterparts, provoke nationalist counter-rhetoric from the political opponents of the first orator. Therefore, political contention is the motor behind the reproduction of hot nationalist rhetoric.

Furthermore, the argument above suggests that a political discussion can become framed in nationalist rhetoric as the result of the internal dynamics of the political debate or as a spin-off of an event or development that is exogenous to the political discussion in question. Political contention was present between the two actors in the present case study, the newly elected President George W. Bush and his administration on the one hand, and *The Nation* as part of a broader leftist opposition to Bush' presidency on the other hand. The latter have continuously contended Bush' legitimacy as the President of the United States, ever since the start of the 'Florida controversy' in the presidential ballot in the Fall of 2000. *The Nation*, the United States' oldest still existing periodical and influential leftist publication, was one of the most authoritative voices in this debate and devoted many (cover) stories to this issue in the course of 2001.⁷⁷ Their criticism of the Bush administration extended further than its alleged illegitimate basis, but also carried on in a stark criticism of its policy initiatives.

My argument is that the nature of this debate changed drastically in the wake of the dramatic events of September 11, 2001. As I will argue below, the exogenous shock of this day, in combination with the strong desire within the Bush administration to anchor its

⁷⁷ See the digital archive of *The Nation* (www.thenation.com); also note that the controversy ended only two months after the September 11 attacks with issuing of the recount report; cf. R. W. McCHESNEY, "The Structural Limitations of US Journalism", in: B. ZELIZER and S. ALLAN (eds.), *Journalism after September 11*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 97.

legitimacy and policies more profoundly in the American society, induced a process of nationalist reframing of the pre-existing debate on the part of the Bush administration. This development signalled a ‘nationalisation’ of the political debate. By that I mean that political contention became predominantly framed as a discussion about the true nature of the American nation, its mission, and its enemies. Hence, ‘nationalist reframing’ can be understood as a process of translation of (pre-existing or new) political differences into a debate over the merits of different interpretations of the fundamental themes constituting the American nationalist ideology.

The Bush administration’s nationalist framing of the events

Nationalist rhetoric in the Bush administration’s early response

Some authors have argued that the Administration’s response in the first ten days after the events on September 11 was limited and vague. James W. Carey argues that the lack of clear communication on the part of the government in part explains the radicalisation of the press accounts in the first days after the terrorist attacks. He contends that there was:

“little help and guidance forthcoming from the White House. President Bush, finally back in Washington, appeared briefly on television on the evening of September 11 but he said little and did less to explain what happened or to calm frayed nerves. About all he did was register outrage and encourage people to go on with their lives, not to allow the terrorists a victory by altering routine. This is not what people wanted to hear. Following the address, he disappeared until Friday night when he

came before Congress to galvanize the legislature and citizenry for a protracted struggle against terrorism [sic, terrorist organisations].”⁷⁸

There are a number of things wrong with this account of the facts. The live television address delivered by the President in the evening of September 11 only came twelve hours after the first commercial airliner crashed into the first of the Twin Towers earlier that day. The speech Bush delivered was short (five minutes) and vague at best. However, it already held the seeds of the rhetorical line of argument that would be developed in the course of the following week. First, Bush alluded to the heroic patriotism of the rescue workers and those who assisted them, a theme that would come back on several occasions later that week. Secondly, he referred to a set of clichés about the American nation: “a strong nation” set apart from others by reason of its “American resolve”, “the brightest beacon of freedom and opportunity in the world”, and empowered by God (cf. the quote from Psalm 23 at the end of the address). Thirdly, the word “evil”, which would become an important theme in the Bush’ rhetoric in the week to come, is used four times in this short address. In this speech, however, the word refers to the terrorist’s acts, rather than the terrorists themselves. Finally, Bush coins the phrase “war on terrorism” in this address, which will become seminal to his argumentation further on.⁷⁹

Unlike what James Carey’s account suggests, George W. Bush did not disappear from the public scene for more than a week after his first intervention. To be sure, Bush did not deliver a prime time speech to the American people until his appearance before Congress in the evening of Thursday September 20th. Yet, he did appear publicly on a number of occasions, making statements and answering question from journalists.⁸⁰ The content of the messages Bush conveyed on these occasions were then consolidated in his address before Congress. The idea of a protracted campaign against terrorist organisations was coined after a

⁷⁸ J. W. CAREY “American Journalism on, before, and after September 11”, in: B. ZELIZER and S. ALLAN (eds.), *Journalism after September 11*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, p. 74.

⁷⁹ THE WHITE HOUSE, *Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation*, 11 Sept. 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>).

⁸⁰ The White House website offers transcripts and video excerpts of seven such events in between Bush’ address on September 11 and the one on September 20.

meeting of National Security officials as early as September 12. On the same occasion, the idea of the “monumental struggle of good versus evil” was reasserted.⁸¹ Another remarkable intervention before Bush’ Congress address was a Q&A session at the White House on the 16th of September. Over the course of a session of 13 minutes there were nine references to the word “evil”, seven of which were attributed to the perpetrators of the attacks (mostly referred to as “evil-doers”).⁸² In a speech one day later, Bush set apart those who planned, executed and supported the attacks from honest Muslims in a press conference in which he sustained that Islam is a peaceful religion and that any other reading is inconsistent with the fundamental teachings of the Islamic faith. Indeed, Bush distinguished those militant fundamentalist groups from all those who truly live by their religious beliefs, not only honest Muslims.⁸³

The above mentioned elements, developed over the course of little more than a week, were then brought together in the extraordinary⁸⁴ presidential address before Congress on the 20th of September. This speech, however, is distinctly different from the rhetoric used earlier that week. First of all, the occasion is different. This time Bush is speaking on prime time television, in Congress, for no less than 41 minutes. Secondly, the opposition between the good and free world against the evil and oppressive enemy is made clearer in this speech than in any of the previous addresses. Third and finally, apart from the fact that this speech brought together the elements that were coined in the days previous to the event, a new important element enters into Bush’ rhetoric. In his speech Bush makes numerous references to the exemplary patriotism of the rescue workers, some of which lost their lives in the line of duty. At the very end of his speech Bush pulls out the police shield of George Howard, a policeman

⁸¹ THE WHITE HOUSE, *Remarks by the President in Photo Opportunity with the National Security Team*, 12 Sept. 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010912-4.html>).

⁸² THE WHITE HOUSE, *Remarks by the President Upon Arrival*, 16 Sept. 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>).

⁸³ THE WHITE HOUSE, *“Islam is Peace” says President*, 17 Sept. 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010917-11.html>).

⁸⁴ The President usually appears in Congress only for the State of the Union once a year.

from New York who died in a rescue operation. The shield was offered to him by the policeman's mother. Bush proclaims that he will carry this insigne with him on his task ahead and promises the American people:

"I will not forget this wound to our country or those who inflicted it. I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people."⁸⁵

This part of the speech is especially significant as Bush, after lauding the patriotism of the rescue workers, identifies himself with them, effectively sharing in their heroic patriotism. Here he declares himself the saviour of the American nation, who will *wage* (not *lead* or *coordinate*) the struggle for freedom and security *for* the American people (not *with* them).

The seeds of monopolisation?

Rogers Brubaker, in an article on nationalism and patriotism in the United States published in mid-2004, argues that in the wake of the September 11 the Bush administration acquired a monopoly on patriotism and that their interpretations of the nation became dominant in the American political society. Referring to this situation he states that:

"No party should be allowed to enjoy a monopoly of the evocative language and powerful iconography of patriotism. The flag is an immensely powerful vernacular symbol [...] The power of that symbol, and with it the right to speak 'in the name of the nation' should not be ceded to those who would usurp the term 'patriot', for example, to label legislation that could just as well be called 'unpatriotic' or 'un-American' for weakening judicial checks on executive power in the name of dubious gains for national security."⁸⁶

Brubaker, here, makes reference to the USA Patriot Act of October 2001, a piece of legislation the Bush Administration devised to give law enforcement and intelligence agencies

⁸⁵ THE WHITE HOUSE, *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People*, 20 Sept. 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>)

⁸⁶ R. BRUBAKER, *Ibid.*, p. 123.

more of a free hand. His argument is that this was one of the ways in which the Administration imposed its own interpretations of patriotism (and nationalism) on the entire American political society.

The question now is whether we can already see the seeds of such usurpation of American patriotism and nationalism by the Bush administration in the first week and a half after the events. I would argue that there is evidence to support such claim. First, Bush' status as the saviour of the nation (self-acclaimed in his September 20th address and not challenged by the media), exempted him from scrutiny in the first weeks after the attacks, effectively giving him a free hand in responding to the attacks. Secondly, it seems that from the early days after the attacks Bush, in his encounters with the press, he seems to suggest that his decisions in the "war against terrorism" somehow are beyond scrutiny from the press. On the 16th of September, when asked about a phone call with the Pakistani president (a question that pops up on numerous occasions during the press conferences during those days), Bush makes the following remark in his answer:

"I'm not at liberty to detail specifically what we have asked him to do. In the course of this conduct of this war against terrorism, I'll be asked a lot, and members of my administration will be asked a lot of questions about our strategies and tactics. And in order to protect the lives of people that will be involved in different operations, I'm not at liberty to talk about it and I won't talk about it."⁸⁷

What is remarkable here is not that the President refuses to go into the details of a conversation with another Head of State, as this is the norm rather than the exception in the conduct of diplomatic relations. What is interesting is the way in which Bush legitimises his refusal to go into details; by invoking national security. Furthermore, he seems to suggest that in the future too, he will refuse to answer questions on the same grounds, even if they do not fall under inter-state relations. National security, therefore, becomes a handy tool to avoid scrutiny from the press.

⁸⁷ THE WHITE HOUSE, *Remarks by the President Upon Arrival*, 16 Sept. 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>).

Nationalist counter-rhetoric: challenging the government's nationalist rhetoric

Thus, it seems that there was an aspiration within the Administration to monopolise American patriotism and nationalism in the wake of the events of September 11. An 'ideological monopoly', however, cannot be regarded as solely the result of those aspiring to hegemony. The process of monopolisation implies the absence or weakness of any group opposing the dominant interpretations of (nationalist) ideology. Therefore, if – as Brubaker and others suggest – the Bush administration monopolised patriotism and nationalism in the United States, then this implies that all other actors in the American political society remained silent, rather than scrutinising or opposing the Administration's analyses and policies. Robert McChesney offers an analysis to this effect with regard to the mainstream US media, arguing that there is evidence to suggest that they were willing "to suspend criticism of President Bush almost *in toto* after September 11".⁸⁸ I will not further explore why the mainstream media did not scrutinise President Bush' actions shortly after September 11. A wide range of publications have already dealt with this issue, identifying a number of causes for the lack of scrutiny from the mainstream media. These explanations range from the fact that journalists were equally in shock after the attacks, to accounts about how the media did not have enough expertise in house to deal with matters of international affairs after a decade of isolationism in the US media; from fears of being labelled unpatriotic after such dramatic events, to explanations rooting in the structures of ownership which – it is argued – inhibit the freedom of press.⁸⁹

What is more interesting to our analysis is the fact that – even though it was marginal – there was still in the first weeks after the events of September 11 a counter-movement,

⁸⁸ R. W. McCHESNEY, *Ibid.*, p. 97 [italics in original].

⁸⁹ Some valuable contributions to this body of literature can be found in: *Journalism after September 11*, B. ZELIZER and S. ALLAN, London: Routledge, 2002.

challenging Bush' interpretations of American patriotism and nationalism and the policies they inspired. McChesney contends that by the end of September 2001 a small section of the media elites started to develop ideas challenging the proposals and policies of the Bush administration, rather than blindly following them (as most of the mainstream media and the political establishment did).⁹⁰ *The Nation*, a leading leftist periodical, was one of these opponents. From the beginning of October⁹¹ a series of articles countered the Bush administration's interpretations of the American nation, its representation of the enemies of the nation, and its policies. In the issue of the 8th of October *The Nation* gave Eric Foner, professor of law at the Colombia University, a platform in which he argued that an act of Congress *defending* civil liberties, rather than *infringing* them, would be "more patriotic".⁹² In the first publication of *The Nation* that deals with the events of September 11, Alexander Cockburn argues against Bush' depiction of the terrorists as "faceless cowards". He argues that, while they may be faceless it is hard to maintain that the terrorists are cowards.⁹³ In the same piece Cockburn criticises the coverage of the events by the mainstream media, an argument that is also furthered by Eric Alterman, another *Nation* contributor.⁹⁴

Similar arguments are made in the subsequent issues of October and November 2001, the covers of which are equally instrumental in the present analysis. The issue of the 29th of October is entitled "Defining a just war". The next issue (the 5th of November), dealing with the widespread anthrax fear, bears the heading "vectors of fear". The most relevant cover is the one from the November 15 issue, asking "Which America Will We Be Now?". The cover is divided into twelve squares, each of which has a photo of an American flag. Additionally, the square on the bottom row on the left even has a portrait of George Washington, a key

⁹⁰ R. W. McCHESNEY, *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁹¹ There was only one issue of *The Nation* published in after the attacks in September 2001, appearing on Monday the 17th of September. This issue did not make any mention of the events of September 11, and therefore it is likely that it was sent to the press before the tragic events.

⁹² E. FONER, "The Most Patriotic Act" in: *The Nation*, 8 Oct. 2001, p. 13.

⁹³ A. COCKBURN, "Faceless Cowards?" in: *The Nation*, 1 Oct. 2001, p. 8.

⁹⁴ E. ALTERMAN, "The Not Obviously Insane Network" in: *The Nation*, 1 Oct. 2001, p. 10.

figure in the American ‘national’ history. The article inside accompanying the cover, comes with another set of pictures of American flags (nine squares this time) covering two-thirds of the first page of the article. The author, Bill Moyers, argues that the Republican Party usurped the American nation, effectively smothering all debate about the course the United States should take. Moyers concedes that there is indeed a fight going on against terrorist organisations, but, he argues, at the same time “there’s also a fight going on to decide the kind of country this is going to be”.

Thus, it is clear that the nationalist framing on the part of the Bush administration certainly evoked a response from the camp of established opponents of the Administration, equally framed in interpretations of the American nationalist ideology. Therefore, the nationalist rhetoric of the Administration appears to have produced nationalist rhetoric among the writers of *The Nation*, though both of them were appealing to different interpretations and different themes of the nationalist ideology to bolster their arguments. Interestingly, both camps in the argument around the USA Patriot Act appealed to “liberty”, the all-important theme in American ideology. The content of the term, however, was rather different. In the Bush administration’s rhetoric “liberty” meant “being free of fear”. Thus, “liberty” became a goal of national security policies (domestic and international). Opponents, however, insisted that the term “liberty” means “personal self-determination” and “protection of personal liberties and from extensive government meddling”.

Employing the vocabulary of previous chapters, both sides of the argument were involved in nationalist rhetoric, lowering and raising anchors, making arguments about the American nation, its enemies and its mission. This interaction, this clash of ideas is the societal thinking process that continuously recreates the American nationalist ideology. As we have argued above, this thinking process was inhibited for a period of time, as a result of the monopolisation of the debate by the Bush administration. The game of political contention,

the throwing of arguments back and forth, however, never really stopped completely. As we have shown in this chapter, though some sections of society (for a plethora of reasons) willingly followed the Administration's reading of the events of September 11, and – connected to this – their interpretations of the American nationalist ideology, other societal groups remained critical and prevented a complete monopoly.

Conclusion

Bringing my argument to a close, I would like to come back to the two major themes making up the core of the above discussion. Firstly, the present dissertation has attempted to shed light onto **the phenomenon of nationalist rhetoric and its relationship to nationalist ideology**. I contend that, to fully grasp the importance of nationalist rhetoric, one should not regard it as solely a tactic of the deceitful. The common view that ‘rhetoric’ equals ‘lies and deception’ is not helpful in a thorough analysis of the phenomenon. Rather, treating it as a form of persuasive discourse, a widely used political tool, regardless of the truthfulness of the claims, it becomes apparent how all-pervasive and central nationalist rhetoric is to modern societies. Also, it exposes the ‘talk about the nation’ in corners of the political arena where we might not expect it.

The expansion of the concept of nationalist rhetoric is also especially useful for the study of nationalist ideology. In the present essay I touched upon the notions of ‘banal’ and ‘hot nationalism’. Nationalism is, as I have argued, not a single set of dogmas, but a continuous interplay between different interpretations of the nation. This conception of nationalism I have called the ‘rhetorical approach to nationalism’. This approach gives us an interesting insight into the difference between ‘banal’ and ‘hot nationalism’. Banal nationalism stands for the set of commonsensical beliefs about the nation that are taken for granted by a large section of the population. Hot nationalism, on the other hand, denotes the themes or beliefs about the nation that are contested in society. I argue that the analytical shift from the orator’s intentions and formal features of the utterance to the reaction of the audience permits a more interesting division between hot and banal nationalism.

The approach I propose has its problems too. The outcome of a ‘rhetorical analysis’, after all, depends greatly on answer to the question: ‘who is the audience?’ It is not impossible that while for society as a whole a certain commonsensical belief is ‘hot’, it is ‘banal’ for a particular segment of the same society. Furthermore, as I have pointed out, banal nationalist beliefs can become hot and vice versa. Finally, it appears that nationalist rhetoric can be ‘banal’ or ‘hot’ to a certain degree, depending to the magnitude of the response to a particular claim. In the present essay I have not attempted to answer these questions. Such endeavour requires more rigorous empirical research. Rather I have concentrated on the theoretical foundations of the proposed ‘rhetorical approach’ to nationalism.

The second major theme in this dissertation was the problem of **‘monopolisation of patriotism and nationalism’** and the inhibitions it poses on the critical process of reproduction of the nationalist ideology. Monopolisation refers to the instance when the societal thinking process about what constitutes the nation is hijacked by a relatively small faction of society. I have contended that a healthy political debate is a prerequisite for a balanced reproduction of the nationalist ideology. All limitations on societal debate (and the ones about the nation in particular) have a hazardous effect on this reproduction process. Monopolisation does not so much affect the central position of the nationalist ideology in society. Rather, monopolisation compromises the ideology’s responsiveness to changes in the political environment. When political debate (in general or about the nation in particular) is inhibited due to the dominance of one group, the outcome of the debate (the ideology) will not have the appeal and richness it needs to fulfil its role in society.

The expectation is that, in the end, this situation is unsustainable and that at some point in time the political environment will have changed in such a way that the hegemonic interpretation of the nationalist ideology can no longer sustain its position in society. However, such sudden readjustment will shock the political system. It would therefore be advisable for a

government to take measures preventing monopolisation and empower oppositional groups. Such measures, however, are often diametrically opposed to the short term interests of governments, as governmental elites more often than not are part of the dominant group in society.

Therefore, an important task rests on the shoulders of academics, journalists, intellectuals, but also teachers and anyone who takes part in the political debate. Thus, the key to a responsive national society does not lie in the denial of nationalism. The answer is to embrace the discussion and to formulate one's own ideas in a balanced and fair manner. This is what makes ideology into a societal thinking process. This is what makes society more than a sponge for dogmatic beliefs.

Bibliography

ALTERMAN, E., "The Not Obviously Insane Network" in: *The Nation*, 1 Oct. 2001, p. 10.

ANDERSON, B., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (Revised Edition), London: Verso, 1991.

BAR-TAL, D., "Introduction: Patriotism: Its Scope and Meaning" in: D. BAR-TAL and E. STAUB (eds.), *Patriotism in the Lives of Individuals and Nations*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1997, pp. 1-19.

BAR-TAL, D., "The Monopolisation of Patriotism" in: D. BAR-TAL and E. STAUB (eds.), *Patriotism in the Lives of Individuals and Nations*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers, 1997, pp. 246-270.

BAR-TAL, D., *Shared Beliefs in a Society: Social psychological analysis*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2000.

BILLIG, M., *Banal Nationalism*, London: Sage, 1995.

BILLIG, M., *Ideology and opinions: Studies in rhetorical psychology*, London: Sage, 1991.

BRUBAKER, R., "In the name of the nation: Reflections on Nationalism and Patriotism" in: *Citizenship Studies*, no. 2 (2004): 8, pp. 115-127.

CAREY, J. W., "American Journalism on, before, and after September 11", in: B. ZELIZER and S. ALLAN (eds.), *Journalism after September 11*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 71-90.

CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE, *Draft Report on 'Workshop on Methodological Nationalism'*, London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 2002 (www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Yearbook/methnatreport.htm).

COCKBURN, A., "Faceless Cowards?" in: *The Nation*, 1 Oct. 2001, p. 8.

- DIJKINK, G., *National Identity and Geopolitical Visions: Maps of pride and pain*, London: Routledge, 1996.
- FONER, E., “The Most Patriotic Act” in: *The Nation*, 8 Oct. 2001, p. 13.
- FRANKFURT, H. G., *On Bullshit*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- GREENFELD, L., *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1992.
- HOWSBAWM, E., and RANGER, T., *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- HUNTINGTON, S. P., *Who are we? America’s Great Debate*, London: Free Press, 2005.
- JODELET, D., “Représentation sociale: phénomène, concept et théorie” in: *Psychologie Sociale*, S. MOSCOVICI (ed.), Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1984.
- KEDOURI, E., *Nationalism*, London: Hutchinson, 1966.
- KENNEDY, E., *A ‘Philosophe’ in the Age of Revolution: Destutt de Tracy and the Origins of ‘Ideology’*, Philadelphia (PA): American Philosophical Society, 1978.
- LIPSET, S. M., *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1979.
- MAYALL, J., *Nationalism and international society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- McCHESNEY, R. W., “The Structural Limitations of US Journalism”, in: in: B. ZELIZER and S. ALLAN (eds.), *Journalism after September 11*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 91-100.
- MOSCOVICI, S., “The phenomenon of social representations”, in: *Social Representations*, R.M. FARR and S. MOSCOVICI (eds.), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- MOYERS, B., “Which America Will We Be Now?” in: *The Nation*, 19 Nov. 2001, pp. pp. 11-14.

- MUNSLOW, A., *Discourse and Culture: the creation of America, 1870-1920*, London: Routledge, 1992.
- PRICE, M., *Television: The Public Sphere and National Identity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- SETON-WATSON, H., *Nations and States*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977.
- SMITH, A. D., "The Nation: invented, imagined, reconstructed?" in: *Reimagining the Nation*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993.
- SMITH, A. D., *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- THE WHITE HOUSE, "*Islam is Peace*" says President, 17 Sept. 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010917-11.html>).
- THE WHITE HOUSE, *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People*, 20 Sept. 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>).
- THE WHITE HOUSE, *Remarks by the President in Photo Opportunity with the National Security Team*, 12 Sept. 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010912-4.html>).
- THE WHITE HOUSE, *Remarks by the President Upon Arrival*, 16 Sept. 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010916-2.html>).
- THE WHITE HOUSE, *Statement by the President in His Address to the Nation*, 11 Sept. 2001 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010911-16.html>).
- WODAK, R. et al., *The Discursive Construction of National Identity* [translated by A. HIRSCH and R. MITTEN], Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.