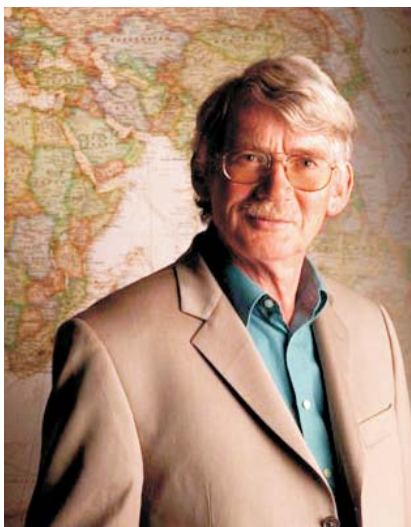


DEMOCRACY, NOT ETHNOCRACY

Michael Mann



MICHAEL MANN is a British-born sociologist, historian, and specialist in the study of social stratification. He is a professor of sociology at UCLA and a visiting professor at Cambridge. He is the author of the much-publicised trilogy, *The Sources of Social Power*, as well as the book, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (2005)

RJ *Different models can be used in the process of nation-building. Which model in your opinion is the most successful?*

I think that historically it depends on what the situation on the ground is. If there are many different ethnic peoples with different languages, it's perfectly possible for an elite to develop a single overarching national identity based on a language which is defined as being the language of modernity. One might recollect the Soviet Union, which cultivated a kind of multi-level sense of national or quasi-national identity by making the republics coterminous with a sense of collective identity. This was reasonably successful

– it wasn't the cause of the breakup of the Soviet Union at least, though once the elites had decided upon its break up, those republics for the most part became their own nation states. But it all depends. If local people have a way of life that is quite distinct from those around them, then it's perhaps unlikely that their sense of identity can be removed.

RJ *Is it possible to preserve ethnic diversity within a state without conflict or tension?*

It can be preserved without that much tension, but it is up to the subordinate peoples themselves to decide how much autonomy they want to maintain; but **it is perfectly possible to have this two-tiered attachment, which can be done by giving regional autonomy to groups, or, in some cases, merely by protecting the language**, introducing compulsory bilingual education, and so on. It's only where there's two groups who have rival claims to their own political authority, their own state, or their own regional government that you're going to get trouble. We might consider the example of Russia and Chechnya, where the Chechens historically had a rather different way of life, a different language, and a different religion. Introduce a large number of Russian settlers and that's a recipe for the

appealing to a project of modernisation in order to bring the nation together? Could this offer a form of collective interaction involving every Russian citizen?

Yes, absolutely. What tended to happen in the late stages of imperial patterns like those of Britain or France was the following: once the policy of, say, Anglicisation started to work, the Welsh people and the Scottish people began to identify the English language as the language of modernity. As a result, parents began to want their children to excel in that language, regardless of their personal thoughts about their own traditional language. So, yes, if you can align the national identity with modernisation, there is a reasonable chance of associating the nation as a whole with modernity. But it has to be more than just a rhetorical thing, you have to be giving the people more opportunities, developing the economy, and so on.

RJ *Each state decides how to treat its own ethnic minorities, and these decisions are obviously made by the elites. Do they represent a general consensus of the public or is it just a self-expression of the elites?*

Well, that depends. I don't think it's just the self-expression of the elites. I think that usually they feel a

If you can identify national identity with modernisation, you have reasonable chances of success

sort of trouble that is very difficult to solve. In such a case it seems likely that you have to have some regional form of political autonomy.

RJ *Do you think Russia is capable of*

certain pressure to start working on the issue of integration. This creates difficulties – these people's way of life is different, their language is different, and usually it involves some degree of realistic acceptance of

those differences, and the autonomy is granted on the basis of that.

RJ *What is the relation between nationalism and democracy? Can they coexist, or are they doomed to be in conflict with one another?*

Once you have democracy as an aspiration, then you have both particular dangers and a general program, a way of doing things. **If you have democracy, you can have a confederal/federal kind of democracy in which different national groups have a degree of autonomy** within that state. I think it's more likely to occur nowadays than the imperial method of integration by force.

But a particular danger comes when you have two, or, perhaps three groups who all have realistic claims to their own state, because then the notion of rule by the people, which is democracy, can take an ethnic turn, and the people can be defined as Serbs rather than Croats, or Hutus rather than Tutsis, and so the ambiguity of 'the people' is associated with the two root words in the Western languages, which derive from the Greek terms, *ethnos*, meaning a kind of ethnicity or national grouping, and *demos*, as in 'democracy.' So that's the danger, and countries that have those two identities have problems. Take Canada, for instance, whose French-speaking population cannot fully integrate into an English-speaking country. As a result, there is some form of federation that gives certain rights to Francophones. And that's the correct model to follow, it is the genuine democratic route. The other one is the perverse democratic route.

RJ *What do you think about a common practice in political science to distinguish between ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism?*

It can be, but the distinction is nowhere near as simple, and actual relations between groups are usually to some degree a mixture of the two, but yes, the models to follow are clearly more civic today. There's no reason why people shouldn't have a sensible ethnic identity. In most of the world this is accomplished in a completely harmless way: nationalism exists for football matches and big games, and there's a feeling that one nationality has some intrinsic value over others, but this ethnic nationalism rarely leads to violence in most countries. Given the institutions of democracy, if you have them, ethnic nationalism shouldn't be much of a problem. The trick is in how you get to that democracy if you have different ethnic conceptions. If there are several legitimate and forcible claims then this can lead to a dangerous situation. ■

Michael Mann was speaking with Yulia Netesova

MISSIONARY NATION



GEOFFREY ALAN HOSKING is a historian of Russia and the Soviet Union. He is widely considered a leading authority on Russian history. He has authored many works, including, *Russia and the Russians* (2001, published in Russia in 2003), and *Rulers and Victims: the Russians in the Soviet Union* (2005)

Exclusively for RJ

Russians, like the English, are a 'missionary nation,' that is, **they dissolved their national identity in a universal mission**, that of holding together a great multi-ethnic empire, and of spreading Orthodox Christianity — or Communism in the 20th century — to the rest of the world. Moreover, since Russia is a territorial state, it has maintained a legitimate interest in stability on its borders, which it is sometimes tempted to enforce in an overbearing, neo-imperialist manner.

All nation-states have ethnic minorities. And in this context there always needs to be a *Leitkultur*, or dominant culture and language, otherwise social and economic interaction becomes difficult. Yet each nationality should have a right to its own cultural and religious life. Of course, reconciling these opposing priorities is difficult, and each nation-state must devise its own way of doing so, without discriminating against minorities. In this respect, Russia's record is quite good, historically speaking, though with some exceptions — such as the anti-Jewish pogroms of the early twentieth centu-

ry or Stalin's deportation of nationalities. In fact, in the Tsarist Empire and in the late Soviet Union, Russians sometimes had the feeling that they were the ones being discriminated against.

Serious discrimination against minorities naturally generates among them the desire to secede. One of the main reasons for the collapse of the USSR was Stalin's earlier mistreatment of the Baltic peoples, West Ukrainians, and north Caucasian peoples. His mass deportation of elites (and, in some cases, of entire nationalities) left a legacy of bitter hatred towards Russians, towards Communists, and towards the Soviet Union. The Baltic peoples were the first to secede; the West Ukrainians delivered the final blow to the USSR with their referendum on December 1st, 1991; and the Chechens have cost the Russian Federation its most serious war since the end of the USSR. In general, it would be wrong for the Russians to have a higher civic status than other ethnic groups, even if their language and culture are generally regarded as the *Leitkultur* of the nation. ■