Red, White, Blue… and Brown

Citizens, Patriots and the Prime Minister

by Stephen Backhouse

Theos
The public theology think tank

Theos

The public theology think tank

what Theos is

Theos is a public theology think tank which exists to undertake research and provide commentary on social and political arrangements. The word, "Theos", and our descriptor, "the public theology think tank", reflect our overall aim of putting God "back" into the public domain. Theos is about social, public theology; about public wisdom.

what Theos stands for

Faith is on the public agenda in a way that is unprecedented in recent times. Theos aims to shape events, not simply react to them. Our aim is to speak wisdom into the increasingly crowded market place of ideas. We seek to demonstrate that religion can have a positive role to play in public debate and the communities we seek to serve.

what Theos works on

Theos undertakes research on a wide range of subject areas. We believe that every issue is a moral issue and reject notions of a sacred/secular divide.

what Theos provides

Theos provides:

- high-quality research, reports and publications;
- an events' programme (including public debates, an annual Theos lecture and an extensive fringe programme at the party conferences);
- news, information and analysis to media companies and other opinion-formers, with a one-stop information line available to journalists; and
- an informative website, www.theosthinktank.co.uk

In addition to our independently driven work, Theos provides research, analysis and advice to individuals and organisations across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Our unique position within the think tank sector means that we have the capacity to develop proposals that carry values - with an eye to demonstrating what really works. Our staff and consultants have strong public affair's experience, an excellent research track record and a high level of theological literacy. We are practised in campaigning, media relations, detailed policy development and effecting policy change.

www.theosthinktank.co.uk

Published by Theos in 2007

ISBN: 978-0-9554453-2-3

For further information and subscription details, please contact:

Theos
Licence Department
34 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 0RE
United Kingdom

T 020 7828 7777
E hello@theosthinktank.co.uk
www.theosthinktank.co.uk

Red, White, Blue… and Brown

Citizens, Patriots and the Prime Minister

by Stephen Backhouse

contents

foreword

The British have always been a little bashful about their patriotism. Few doubt that the majority of Britons feel genuine attachment and loyalty to their country but equally few are prepared to show it in public. A flag in every garden is simply not the British way.

This seems to be changing. Recent years have seen patriotism emerge from the shadow of British understatement onto the national political agenda.

Whilst this could offer a hostage to opportunism, this report argues that the way in which Gordon Brown has engaged with the issues of patriotism is anything but opportunistic.

Few figures have given the subject as sustained and careful attention as the new Prime Minister. *Red, White, Blue… and Brown* explores his speeches and writings on this issue from the last twenty years, analysing, in particular, his three pillars of liberty, responsibility and fairness.

It identifies two major strands in his thinking - the 'national' and the 'neighbourly' - and argues strongly that it is the latter that will ultimately help us build the civil society that Mr Brown and others wish to see.

Commitment to the basic civic values of the state is essential and non-negotiable if we are to live together in peace. Insofar as patriotism encourages in people adherence to the rule of law, freedom of speech, the democratic process, etc. it is a wholly good thing.

However, to turn to it to help build social cohesion and foster civil society is to load it with more weight than it alone can bear.

Patriotism, this report argues, draws from the same well-spring as nationalism and as such, risks some of its errors. Patriotic rhetoric can all too easily, if unintentionally, become exclusive rather than inclusive.

Moreover, it is far from clear whether patriotic sentiment encourages and facilitates civic engagement. The US, for example, is one of the most patriotic societies on earth, and yet, as Robert Putnam and others have demonstrated, its reservoirs of social capital are running dry. If patriotism were so clearly correlated to citizenship, we would expect to see America's civic society in better health than it evidently is.

Ultimately, this report argues, it is good neighbours, rather than good patriots, who make the best citizens.

This argument will surprise and challenge some readers. Current social research does, however, support the author's case. A recent study conducted for the Camelot Foundation by Ipsos MORI exploring 'Young People and British Identity' concluded that 'as an agent of social cohesion young people are unable to see how Britishness as a shared social identity can work'.

Similarly research conducted by Communicate Research for Theos found that 68% of people want to live in a more neighbourly society as opposed to 16% who want to live in a more patriotic society.

Such research underlines the fact that the report's arguments are pro- rather than anti-patriotic. Rather than charging patriotism with the impossible task of creating a cohesive and committed citizenry, it seeks to reflect the reality of British society, putting patriotic loyalty in its proper place.

The patriotism debate is a live one in Britain today and Gordon Brown has made one of the most positive and considered contributions to it. It is our hope that this report will also contribute to the debate and encourage policy makers to correctly understand and value patriotism, and then to go beyond it, adopting a 'neighbourly model' for citizenship in their efforts to shape and strengthen British society.

Paul Woolley, Director, Theos
Nick Spencer, Director of Studies, Theos
July 2007

introduction

> This country is a blessed nation. The British are special. The world knows it. In our innermost thoughts, we know it. This is the greatest nation on earth.
> (Tony Blair, 2007)[1]

> As Edith Cavell insisted herself, patriotism is "not enough". She recognised also values that transcended nationalism … Her ministry did not discriminate. Her compassion knew no nationality … Her patriotism was not the sole motivating factor…
> (Gordon Brown, 2007)[2]

Who are we? To what - or to whom - do we owe our identity, our responsibility, our allegiance? In the current political climate, issues of citizenship and national identity are never far from the headlines. Working under the shadow of multiculturalism, devolution and globalisation, to name but a few facets of modern British life, now more than ever mainstream politicians and commentators have to come to grips with what goes into defining and maintaining civic society.

This report welcomes the emerging interest in Britishness, but urges politicians to go beyond patriotism in their objective of building civil society. More specifically, it encourages the new Prime Minister to remember the implications of his own praise of martyred World War II nurse Edith Cavell. We need to recognise the importance of the narrative of national identity, and to go beyond it. Ultimately, it is a sense of "neighbour" rather than "nation" that will best contribute to citizenship in modern Britain.

In reality, this neighbourly model already lies at the heart of British civic life, and provides a closer fit with British society than the nationalist models sometimes imposed upon it. Patriotic rhetoric has its place, but it can only go so far in building the sort of society that the new Prime Minister and his colleagues envision.

The report focuses, first and foremost, on the thought of Gordon Brown. Mr Brown has long been engaged with issues of citizenship and national identity, having written and spoken widely on both. The report undertakes an analysis of these speeches, articles and essays, examining his use of national identity, patriotic rhetoric and his ideas of citizenship.

But, it is not only about Gordon Brown. It is also about any commentator or politician who uses the language of national identity, or who turns to patriotism as a motivation for the ethos of the good citizen. It explores some of the problems that cluster around patriotism,

nationalism and national identity, and suggests an alternative route to citizenship in modern Britain. As such, it is not "anti-patriotic" and certainly not "anti-British". Rather, it argues that there are problems related to patriotism and national identity that are often overlooked. A consideration of these is long overdue.

In a number of speeches Gordon Brown has spoken of his vision for a United Kingdom in which her citizens are motivated by a sense of civic patriotism. For the new Prime Minister, it is clear that this includes a renewed appreciation of national institutions, a celebration of a shared story of British history, and a reinvigorated pride in patriotic symbols, most notably the Union Jack. Mr Brown looks into the past and discovers common characteristics that suggest Britain's future destiny. He paints a picture of the national character, finding inherent in it a life of citizenship founded on the three pillars of freedom, responsibility and fairness. We consider his analysis in the first chapter.

The report argues that what is good about Gordon Brown's vision of citizenship can be used to correct what is faulty about it. There is something worthwhile and well said in his portrait of the citizen who embodies freedom, responsibility and fairness. However, there are elements present in his project which serve as obstacles to his ultimate goal. Two "strands" - the "national" and the "neighbourly" - can be identified running through the Prime Minister's thought, which he does not always clearly distinguish. Each is important, but each can pull against the other if sufficient care is not taken.

The national strand attempts to ground citizenship in national pride, reverence for symbols, feelings of patriotism and the like. It seeks to tell the "essential" story common to all, rooted in a version of history that suggests a national destiny. The neighbourly strand provides a model for participation within a plural society, emphasising a mindset of civic responsibility and social participation. Its reference points are found in the Britain of united kingdoms, cultures and peoples that live and flourish alongside each other.

Gordon Brown often conflates the "neighbourly" with the "national". This report argues that the two strands are, in fact, distinct. Moreover, it argues that by appealing to patriotic sentiment as a motivational force, Mr Brown is in danger of undermining what is good about his own citizenship project. In short, a sense of national values is important, but it is the neighbourly strand that is accessible, solid and most useful to the demands of everyday life in modern Britain. It is good neighbours, not good patriots, who make the best citizens.

Gordon Brown and others like him seek to distance themselves from charges of nationalism by drawing a distinction between patriotic and nationalistic sentiment. The malignant extremes of nationalist ideology are, of course, well known. The resurgence of fascist and far-right racist politics in Britain and Europe is a real problem. However, there are other forms of "nationalistic" thinking, most notably in the mainstream parties of Scotland and Wales, that are not of this ilk. To discount nationalism out of hand merely as a fascist ideology is to simplify a complex idea, and to impugn the motives of many well-meaning politicians.

That said, this report is critical of "nationalism" as a basis for civic thought. It should be possible to offer an analysis of "nationalism" that steers clear of tarring all nationalists with the same brush, while at the same time remaining critical of some of the fundamental tenets of nationalist thinking. For this reason, chapter two explores the concept of nationalism, considering its modern development, its pseudo-theological values and the problems relating to selective historical memory and narratives of identity that lie at its heart.

Chapter three goes on to explore the tradition that seeks to substitute nationalism with patriotism. Often referred to as constitutional, or civic, patriotism, this is clearly the camp within which Mr Brown has planted his flag. Proponents of civic patriotism wish to keep all the "goods" of nationalism, while at the same time distancing themselves from its unsavoury elements. Civic patriotism seeks to rally around state, flag and common "rational" symbols, rather than nation, race and cultivated myth. This report suggests that where patriotism draws from the same wellspring as nationalism, it is not a viable alternative to the social problems afforded by nation-centred ideology. The shining example of constitutional patriotism is the USA, which is Mr Brown's favourite point of comparison. For this reason, this chapter considers the American experience as a case study, assessing whether the patriotic atmosphere there really does produce the sort of citizen that Mr Brown wants and the UK needs. Ultimately, the report argues, it does not, concluding that the nationalistic/ patriotic paradigm is not the best way to produce citizens fit for the reality of modern Britain.

As a source of motivation for citizenship, patriotism shares many of the problems of nationalism and is not a sufficient alternative. This does not, of course, mean that all patriots are racist nationalists or that a nation's cultural context is irrelevant to its citizen's identity or its social welfare. What it does suggest, is that patriotism, like nationalism, asks citizens to focus their attention on such things as "the people", "national symbol" and "destiny" - concepts that might sound good in a stirring speech, but which, in fact, offer very little by way of substance when it comes to the practical job of living in the real world, especially the real world that is modern, plural Britain. Instead of attempting to ascribe to an "essentialist" position that subsumes all the various British cultures into one imagined nation, this report suggests that what British society needs is a model of citizenship that recognises, and thrives on, the diverse nature of life in the UK.

It is good neighbours, not good patriots, who make the best citizens.

To talk about the variety of cultures that make up Britain is not to revert to some sort of postmodern appeal that values diversity simply as an end in itself. There is a difference between the ideology of pluralism, which encourages the creation of isolated and parallel cultures, and the reality of plurality, which is an accurate description of our everyday life of multiple narratives contributing to a common society. We can (and should) talk of the "story" of the British people, for example, in school history lessons. Such a narrative is necessary for providing the context

in which neighbours live alongside each other. There is nothing to be gained from schools teaching only the "bad" parts of British history in some sort of attempt to assuage liberal guilt.

Instead, it is argued that the more we tell of the whole British story, the more various British people will recognise themselves in it, and the more people will be able to understand where they and their neighbours came from and why they are here. The problem inherent in the patriotic model that Mr Brown sometimes endorses, of pledging allegiance to an "essential" British national spirit, is that it simply doesn't deliver the goods. Abstract concepts alone do not rebuild neighbourhoods and can lead to a further splintering of society, as different groups seek to protect what is uniquely theirs from being changed, absorbed or discarded by the "essentialist" programme.

What, then, should we do? If nationalism is dangerous and patriotism ultimately inadequate, what model might we adopt in our attempt to nurture citizens and citizenship? Chapter four argues that the "good neighbour" is the most promising base for developing the good citizen. One's neighbour is not defined according to controversial or intangible national characteristics. She is geographically located, but at the same time has clear local, countrywide and international applications.

Perhaps more importantly, the citizen-as-good-neighbour is not abstract or overly theoretical in the way that citizen-as-good-patriot can be. Gordon Brown does, in fact, offer an excellent picture of the good neighbour in his speeches, drawn from his three pillars of liberty for all, responsibility by all and fairness to all. He looks forward to "an explicit definition of citizenship, a renewal of civic society, a rebuilding of our local government and a better balance between diversity and integration."[3] He believes that such a project lies within Britain's reach, as the three pillars are intrinsic to British life.

The "golden thread" that Gordon Brown identifies running through British history is "an expansive view of liberty - the idea of government accountable to the people, evolving into the exciting idea of empowering citizens to control their own lives." Woven into that thread of liberty is "a strong sense of duty and responsibility … thus creating out of the idea of duty and responsibility the Britain of civic responsibility, civic society and the public realm."[4] In his speeches, Mr Brown also provides a host of practical measures that go some way to filling in this idea of the neighbourly citizen, practical measures that revolve around his "three pillars". First, he says, we do not meet the ideal of liberty if we allow power to become over-centralised. Second, we are not responsible for all if we do not encourage and build up civic society. Finally, we are not fair to all if too many people are excluded from the decision-making process.

Having examined the problems and inadequacies posed by nationalism and patriotism, this report concludes that what Britain needs - and what Mr Brown seems to want - is an ethic of citizenship that is able to thrive within a situation of cultural diversity. Ultimately, this needs to draw its strength from the neighbourly, rather than the national, elements within the Prime Minister's thinking.

The "neighbourly citizen" is already present in British life. Indeed, it is a more natural fit with British life than the image of the flag-waving patriot sometimes gleaned from Mr Brown's speeches. It is the good neighbour, and not the good patriot, who embodies what is most admirable about Britain today, and it is the good neighbour rather than the good patriot who is best placed to cultivate the civil society that Gordon Brown, rightly, so esteems.

introduction - references

1 Tony Blair, Resignation speech at Trimdon Labour Club, Sedgefield, 10 May 2007
2 Gordon Brown, Courage: *Eight Portraits* (Bloomsbury, 2007) p. 35
3 Gordon Brown, *Keynote Speech to the Fabian Society* (www.fabian-society.org.uk/press_office) 14 January 2006
4 Brown, *Fabian*

1

citizen

It is not difficult to find politicians who dip into the rhetoric of national identity or who attempt to deliver stirring patriotic messages in praise of the British people.

After reports in 2000 that Tony Blair sent a letter to Cabinet colleagues telling them to be more patriotic, minister Michael Wills was appointed as a "patriotism envoy" to co-ordinate efforts to ensure that the government was not seen as unpatriotic.[1] As for his own patriotic pride, said Blair in 2006, it "has only grown during my time as Prime Minister".[2] David Miliband, asked on the Today programme whether he would be flying an England flag from his car, was initially bemused, causing a minor smirch to his national credentials. Wiser counsel intervened and, when he was asked the same question ten hours later on a different radio programme, he gave the correct, affirmative, answer.[3]

Conservative leader David Cameron has said that he thinks that "a sense of national identity helps foster social cohesion". No one party can claim an exclusive hold on patriotism. It should, he says, "transcend politics… its value is [a] unifying, not a divisive force."[4] His predecessor, Michael Howard, began one of his election broadcasts with a straightforward appeal to patriotism: "Britain is a great country. My parents always used to tell me it is the best country in the world."[5] In 2003, Oliver Letwin warned against giving too many senior policing jobs to foreigners: "there are some jobs at the core of our state and society which we want to know that the people doing them are absolutely governed by patriotism."[6]

For his part, one of the most remarkable things about Gordon Brown is the consistency and quality of thought that has gone into his vision for British citizenship and of its foundations. Despite spending a decade in the Treasury, Mr Brown has proved himself to be a politician genuinely interested in the more esoteric facets of British life: nation, culture and symbol. As he himself has noted, in an age where issues of "union and devolution" and "multiculturalism and integration" are never far from the headlines, the exploration of the meaning of Britishness is no longer just an academic debate. It has practical significance.[7] An early publication on the politics of nationalism and devolution registered an interest in British identity that has not abated, leading to a number of keynote speeches and articles, the most recent being a pamphlet extolling the virtues of Scotland's union within Britain.[8] Although the material spans a number of years and is spread diversely over various media, it is possible to identify coherent themes in his treatment in order to build up a comprehensive picture of Gordon Brown's vision of national identity and citizenship.

Mr Brown's citizen (he very rarely refers to British subjects) is one who thrives amongst the diverse cultures that make up the United Kingdom:

> We have always been a country of different nations and thus of plural identities - a Welshman can be Welsh and British, just as a Cornishman or woman is Cornish, English and British - and may be Muslim, Pakistani or Afro-Caribbean, Cornish, English and British.[9]

And yet, diversity and plurality are not celebrated as ends in themselves. Mr Brown's vision is motivated by pride in a sense of an overarching British national identity:

> We the British people should be able to gain great strength from celebrating a British identity which is bigger than the sum of its parts and a union that is strong because of the values we share and because of the way these values are expressed through our history and our institutions.[10]

These values of civic life found in British history are the qualities of liberty, responsibility and fairness, rooted "in the best of our history", and giving a "shared purpose".[11] By liberty, Mr Brown means a freedom in the civic space that "is not just passive, about restricting someone else's powers, but active, people empowered to participate."[12] British liberty has always gone hand in hand with responsibility. For Mr Brown, this is the reason that liberty has not degenerated into radical individualism in this country. Responsibility comes alive in voluntary associations, churches and public service. The British people "have consistently regarded a strong civic society as fundamental to our sense of ourselves." It is "the moral space" in which "duty constrains the pursuit of self-interest".[13]

The natural corollary to freedom for all and responsibility by all is fairness to all. For Mr Brown, fairness means the pursuit of equality of opportunity for all, and unfair privileges for no one. "Fairness" is, of course, a quality that usually applies in individual, private relations. As such, it is less obviously a "public" matter than is freedom or responsibility. For Mr Brown, fairness works at the social level insofar as the guarantee of fairness comes from government.[14] He envisions schemes in which the individual's sense of fair play is enabled and rewarded by the civic structures. "For the good society to flourish to the benefit of all, private endeavour must be matched by public endeavour."[15]

For Gordon Brown, appreciation of these shared national values goes hand in hand with an explicit sense of national pride. These three qualities lie "at the heart of a modern Britishness." They are "central elements of a modern and profoundly practical patriotism."[16]

> In my view, the surest foundation upon which we can advance … will be to apply to the challenges that we face, the values of liberty, responsibility and fairness - shared civic values which are not only the ties that bind us, but also give us patriotic purpose as a nation and a sense of direction and destiny.[17]

According to Mr Brown, patriotism is a virtue that should be actively cultivated. In opposition to the view that patriotism can be defined only by the political Right, he

consciously takes a stand that is "a long way from the old Left's embarrassed avoidance of an explicit patriotism":[18]

> …a stronger sense of patriotic purpose would help resolve some of our most important national challenges … and show people the responsibilities as well as rights that must be at the heart of modern citizenship.[19]

Gordon Brown's guiding vision is of the citizen who embodies freedom, responsibility and fairness. Between them, these three qualities together provide an excellent and commendable foundation for modern British society:

> There is a golden thread which runs through British history, of the individual standing firm against tyranny and then of the individual participating in their society… And the tensile strength of that golden thread comes from countless strands of common continuing endeavour in our villages, towns and cities, the efforts and achievements of ordinary men and women, united by a strong sense of responsibility… [A Britain defined] by its proliferation of local clubs, associations, societies and endeavours - a Britain where liberty did not descend into licence and where freedom was exercised with responsibility.[20]

The Britain we admire (is) of thousands of voluntary associations; the Britain of mutual societies, craft unions, insurance and friendly societies and cooperatives; the Britain of churches and faith groups.

Mr Brown's vision of British society, founded on these qualities, is appealing, accessible, and worth protecting.

The Prime Minister is one of the most thoughtful modern politicians to have analysed Britishness and there is much that is well said in his writings and speeches on citizenship and national identity. There is, however, underlying his thinking a tension that, unless recognised, risks undermining the whole project. The conceptions of freedom, responsibility and fairness are embodied in two strands of thought that are subtly but significantly different.

One is the neighbour strand, which deals with communities, local endeavours, individual and social responsibility, and the like. Most of Gordon Brown's discussions of the British citizen are filled with practical suggestions and policy announcements concerned with empowering local groups and governments in order to aid and strengthen the neighbourhood. The neighbour model is often in evidence in Mr Brown's speeches:

> And so the Britain we admire [is] of thousands of voluntary associations; the Britain of mutual societies, craft unions, insurance and friendly societies and cooperatives; the Britain of churches and faith groups; the Britain of municipal provision from libraries to parks; and the Britain of public service. Mutuality, cooperation, civic associations and social responsibility and a strong civic society… The British way was always - as JonathanSacks has suggested - more than self interested individualism - at the core of

> British history lies the very ideas of "active citizenship", "good neighbour", civic pride and the public realm.[21]

The citizen-as-neighbour strand will be considered more fully in a later section of this report.

The other is the national strand of thought. Replete with stirring rhetoric, this is the aspect of Mr Brown's vision that deals with patriotism, national pride, history and destiny:

> A strong sense of being British helps unite and unify us; it builds stronger social cohesion among communities. We know that other countries have a strong sense of national purpose, even a sense of their own destiny. And so should we.[22]

Gordon Brown often appeals to America and reverence for American patriotic symbols as positive examples of the sort of attitude he would like to see in Britain:

> But think for a moment: what is the British equivalent of the US 4th of July…? What I mean is: what is our equivalent for a national celebration of who we are and what we stand for? And what is our equivalent of the national symbolism of a flag in every garden?[23]

It is within the national strand that we find Mr Brown discussing the "essential" or "overarching" sense of British identity, which he sees as uniting the plurality of cultures living in modern Britain. So, for example, he quotes with approval the claim that if citizenship is to mean anything at all, "ministers must sign up to an overarching set of British values".[24] Here, the model of the citizen-as-patriot is in full force:

> Just as in wartime a sense of common patriotic purpose inspired people to do what is necessary, so in peace time a strong modern sense of patriotism and patriotic purpose which binds people together can motivate and inspire.[25]

Gordon Brown has often called for a debate about "what Britishness means". He hopes that out of this debate will flow "a rich agenda for change" which will include, among other things, "an explicit definition of citizenship, a renewal of civic society, a rebuilding of our local government and a better balance between diversity and integration".[26] These are all excellent goals and Mr Brown is to be applauded for the way that he has made these issues central to his politics.

A "national duty" is, in fact, different from a "neighbourly duty". The object or target of one's duty is defined differently in each.

However, if his emphasis on one strand of thought comes at the expense of the other strand, he runs the risk of undermining his own vision of citizenship. In particular, the Prime Minister fails to make a distinction between the national and the neighbour

models in his speeches, instead, consistently running them together in service of the citizen who embodies the qualities of liberty, responsibility and fairness. Yet, a "national duty" is, in fact, different from a "neighbourly duty". The object or target of one's duty is defined differently in each.

There is a wealth of academic literature and theory attesting to this difference, although that is not to say the difference is purely academic. The difference may, at first, seem negligible, but in multicultural, indeed multinational Britain, it is anything but slight. In practice, should one prioritise the duties owed to one's co-national or to one's neighbour? A neighbourhood forms a different type of community from that of the Black, Muslim, Christian or other "communities" often presented to us through the media and government policy, to list but a few examples from an ever-proliferating list.

Such a difference in orientation works itself out in a number of ways. So, for example, where "community" is primarily defined as a national sub-group within a wider, dominant national culture, the allocation of public resources to such communities becomes fraught with tensions and grievances. In addition, there is the perennial problem of who counts as being "in" the community or who is a valid spokesman for it.

It would be foolish to claim that a renewed emphasis on the neighbour, rather than national, form of community will solve all problems, or that it will suffice in itself as a workable public policy. Government will still have to make tough decisions about the spending of public money, or the assignment of housing. Neighbourhoods are not free from problems. However, a focus on shared local space rather than shared cultural assumptions as the locus of "community" would go a good way to providing a corrective to the problems currently facing society.

What is needed is a shift in focus to an understanding of "community" that is primarily a congregation of neighbours participating in a shared locality. Such a shift not only bypasses the problems that arise when the racial/religious element is seen as the dominant factor, it is also a closer fit to the way that many Britons live their lives - in communities that comprise a number of nationalities and cultural groups living side by side.

National models invariably tend towards exclusion and some form of cultural and social disintegration, even when their focus does not lead to outright violence. There are two models of citizenship available to society, two fundamental ways of seeing one's primary social identity. Ultimately, the national model is in danger of following a trajectory away from civic life, and in tension with the values of the neighbour. Thus, an emphasis on the national strand of thought can serve to undermine the sort of citizen that Mr Brown wants and modern Britain needs. It is, as we shall explore, the neighbourly strand of thought, rather than the patriotic or nationalistic, that best contributes to the threefold qualities of liberty, responsibility and fairness that are central to the Prime Minister's vision of citizenship.

conclusion

Gordon Brown envisions a British citizenship that embodies the qualities of liberty, responsibility and fairness. In his speeches and articles over the years, he has articulated two distinct, although often conflated, models for realising this vision: that of the neighbour, which deals with communities, local endeavours, individual and social responsibility, and that of the national, which appeals to patriotism, essential national identity, history and destiny. Mr Brown's emphasis on this second model risks coming at the expense of the first and undermining his own vision of citizenship. It is, in short, good neighbours, and not good patriots, who make the best citizens. Accordingly, Gordon Brown (and other political figures who engage in this debate) need to go beyond patriotism and to place a greater emphasis on the citizen-as-neighbour model if they are to cultivate the civil society they (rightly) deem to be crucial to the security and well-being of twenty-first century Britain.

chapter 1 - references

1 'Blair appoints "patriotism envoy"', *BBC News*\ (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/1040114.stm), 25 November 2000
2 Tony Blair, *Pride of Britain Awards* (www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page10377.asp), 8 Nov 2006
3 See David Miliband's blog: www.davidmiliband.defra.gov.uk
4 David Cameron, *Speech to the Great Briton Awards* (www.conservatives.com), 26 January 2006
5 Election 2005, *BBC News* (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/vote_2005/blog/4438315.stm), 12 April 2005
6 Oliver Letwin (www.conservatives.com/tile.do?def=news.story.page&obj_id=63118), 6 June 2003
7 See Gordon Brown, *Keynote Speech to the Fabian Society* (www.fabian-society.org.uk/press_office), 14 January 2006
8 HM Drucker and Gordon Brown, *The Politics of Nationalism and Devolution* (Longman, 1980); G Brown and Douglas Alexander, Stronger Together (Fabian Society, 2007)
9 Brown, *Fabian*
10 Brown, *Fabian*
11 Gordon Brown, "Liberty, Responsibility and Fairness" in *Moving Britain Forward: Selected Speeches 1997-2006* (Bloomsbury, 2006), p. 31
12 Brown, *Liberty*, p. 34
13 Brown, *Liberty*, p. 38
14 Brown, *Liberty*, p. 41
15 Brown, *Liberty*, p. 42
16 Brown, *Liberty*, p. 31
17 Brown, *Fabian*
18 Brown, *Fabian*
19 Gordon Brown, "We Need a United Kingdom," *Daily Telegraph*, 13 January 2007
20 Brown, *Liberty*, p. 32
21 Brown, *Fabian*
22 Gordon Brown, "Seminar on Britishness at the Commonwealth Club" (www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/newsroom_speeches/speeches/chancellorexcheqer), 27 February 2007
23 Brown, *Fabian*
24 Brown quoting Melanie Phillips, "The Need to Defend the Nation", *Daily Mail*, 5 April 2004, in Brown, *Britishness*, p. 11
25 Brown, *Fabian*
26 Brown, *Fabian*

2

nationalist

In order to argue the case that the British citizen is better served by the neighbour model than the national one, it is necessary to examine the issues and problems surrounding patriotism and its close cousin, nationalism. Mr Brown, like other mainstream politicians, seeks to distance himself from charges of nationalism and attempts to draw a distinction between patriotic and nationalistic sentiment. Most, although not all, commentators recognise that nationalism is a non-starter, often moving on to propose patriotism as an alternative motivation for civic life. Whilst this report agrees that nationalism provides a poor foundation for civil society, it also argues that patriotic commentators have passed too quickly over nationalism and, therefore, have not properly considered the thing for which patriotism is a supposed substitute. This chapter examines the problems and weaknesses related to nationalism and leads on to the next which evaluates the proposed "patriotic" alternative.

Three problems related to a nation-centred ethos for civic life stand out. The first is that nationalism is based on a cultural construction, a fiction disguised as a natural phenomenon. This poses problems for society when the nationalist narrative is made to be the prime motivator for citizen identity. Second, nationalism is an inadequate base for civil society in that it perpetuates the myth of destiny, betraying a pseudo-religious element that is dangerously deterministic. Third, nationalism tends towards tighter and tighter exclusivity, to the detriment of the reality of our cultural identities. In claiming to tell the story of a person's essential identity, the nationalist, in fact, abstracts and alienates people from the real make-up of their own society. These three problems make nationalism an unstable base for a healthy sense of citizenship and a flourishing civic life.

cultural constructions and imagined communities

What do nationalists wish to place at the heart of their notion of civil society? What is a nation and what is nationalism? The reality of these phenomena is undeniable, yet the task of articulating a clear definition of the terms is notoriously difficult, as is evident from the endless discussions, in Britain and elsewhere, about national identity, ethnicity, allegiance and the limits of cultural autonomy and multiculturalism.

One of the reasons for this difficulty lies in the history of their development. Most commentators agree that nations are a relatively modern phenomenon, and that the ideology and discourse of nationalism proper only became prevalent in the latter half of the eighteenth century.[1] The word "nationalism" has been traced back to 1798, but it appears to have been little used at that time, not appearing in dictionaries until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[2] The relative newness of "the nation" meant that the concept was in constant flux, its contours developing and new forms of nationalism springing up.

Nevertheless, definitions emerged, with the sociologist Anthony D Smith, an authority on nationalism, defining the nation as "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and memories, a mass, public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members." Accordingly, he defines nationalism as "an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, unity and identity of a human population, some of whose members conceive it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'".[3]

Nationalism is a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty. All nationalisms maintain that "the people" must be free to pursue their own destiny. This involves fraternity and unity, and the dissolution of internal divisions. Significantly, it also involves being gathered together in a single historic territory and sharing a single public culture. This doctrine, that nations should inhabit a territory of their own, brings into view the problematic relationship between states and nations. Although the terms are commonly used interchangeably, states are not nations. Indeed, most modern countries, and certainly the countries of North America and Europe, are states hosting a multitude of nations.

A state is a relatively straightforward object. It is a matter of geography, borders and, above all, legal jurisdiction. The nation is much more fluid. It is in essence "a psychological bond" that joins a people and differentiates them from others in subtle or vital ways.[4] The fact, therefore, that the term "nation" is often employed as a substitute for a legal, geographical unit, namely the state, is confusing and unhelpful. Ultimately, nationalism does not demand that the individual focus his loyalty upon the state (land and law), but the nation (language, culture, race). This common confusion is a problem because commentators often rightly recognise that nationalism is one of the most powerful political forces in the world, but then incorrectly diagnose and apply.

In this light it is ironic that nationalism is a force that often works against the state, not in service to it. This has a bearing on the efforts of so-called "nation-builders", who are, in fact, in the business of building stable states:

> With very few exceptions, the greatest barrier to state unity has been the fact that the states each contain more than one nation, and sometimes hundreds.[5]

This can be seen in the recent efforts to institute new economic, political and legal frameworks in Iraq. In the face of constant fighting between Sunni, Shia, Kurdish and other groups within that country, the Americans and British are dealing with the fact that, while Iraq might be lacking the infrastructure of state, it is not short of nations.

Nationalism requires an ambiguous relationship to history in order to thrive, for it is a living idea, not simply a brute fact of geography.

With nationalism, it is historic rights, heritage and generational inheritance that determine the culture. Only this is taken by nationalists to constitute "authentic identity".[6] Nationalisms are historically conditioned: rooted in the past, celebrated in the present, and providing hope for triumph and success in the future. Each period, past, present and future, is continually constructed and re-imagined according to the nationalist doctrine's current need (which is why identifying the roots of "the nation" can be so difficult). Nationalism requires an ambiguous relationship to history in order to thrive, for it is a living idea, not simply a brute fact of geography:

> The self-consciousness of nations is a product of the nineteenth century. What really and finally matters is the thing which is apprehended as an idea, and, as an idea, is vested with emotion until it becomes a cause and a spring of action… a nation must be an idea as well as a fact before it can become a dynamic force.[7]

The claim has been made that "nation" is an idea and "nationalism" is an act of collective imagination. For some, the notion that nation is an invention is a cause for indignation. Melanie Phillips, in her book *Londonistan*, critically quotes a report from the Runnymede Trust which suggests that the "nation" is an artificial construct and that there is not a fixed conception of national identity and culture.[8] In what Phillips sees as another example of "British society trying to denude itself of its identity", she criticises the Arts Council for saying: "British culture is not a single entity; we should rightly speak of British cultures".[9] Is this, as Phillips and others suggest, an example of political correctness gone mad?

It would seem not. Quite apart from whatever recommendations they might make, the statements from the Runnymede Trust and the Arts Council regarding the reality of "nations" and "cultures" are straightforwardly true. There simply is more than one culture adhering within the borders of "Britishness". At the very least there are three cultures, Welsh, Scottish and English, four, if one talks about the United Kingdom

rather than Britain and thereby includes Northern Ireland. Moreover, each of these national identities is itself divisible into other identifiable cultures. A Yorkshireman is not a Cornishman, although they are both English. A Shetland Islander enjoys a different cultural identity from that of her Scottish Lowlands' cousin, and so on. What is more, these national identities are not part of the apparatus of the physical world like mountains or rivers. They are psychological and cultural productions of human beings or, put another way, artificial constructs. Thus, historian Eric Hobsawm can see the nation in large part as a set of invented traditions comprising national symbols, mythology and suitably tailored history,[10] and sociologist Benedict Anderson can say of the nation that it is an "imagined political community".[11]

The question, however, is not whether nations are real or whether nationalism is empty of content. Of course, these things exist, but they exist as constructed communities, kept alive by symbols, ethnic memory, myth and common consent. Although the nation is an invented/imagined entity, it is still real enough:

> Nations and nationalism are real and powerful sociological phenomena, even if their reality is quite different from the tale told about them by nationalists themselves.[12]

It would, indeed, be foolish to say that "Britain" or various "British cultures" do not exist, but it is equally mistaken to ignore the hand of human ingenuity, imagination and construction that is essential to those identities.

As a necessary condition for their claim to be the ground and purpose of authentic identity, nationalist narratives present themselves as historically inviolable, rooted in self-evident or common sense truths. The reality, however, is always different from the constructed image. Nationalism effectively picks and chooses what of the past culture it finds useful for its own story. History is the backdrop to nationalism's selective use of its cultural wealth, which often radically transforms the cultural artefacts that it finds. Dead languages are revived, traditions reinvented and fictitious pristine purities restored as seen, for example, in the nineteenth century reinvention and use of "the Celts" in the service of Scottish and Irish nationalism. Thus, despite its favoured self-image as a spontaneous outpouring of "the people", nationalism is, in fact, a product of intellectual endeavour and (re)education:

> The basic deception and self-deception practised by nationalism is [that] nationalism is, essentially, the general imposition of a high culture on society.[13]

Nationalism is a cultural invention presented as natural and inevitable, an indoctrination of the people with the aim of producing The People.

pseudo-theology and the myth of destiny

Any student of nationalism cannot help but notice the religious flavour that nationalist narratives inevitably take. Concepts such as "essence", "destiny" and "sacrifice" abound. Yet, ultimately, these are not concepts and this is not a religion that is conducive to modern civil society. By nurturing myths of cultural superiority and inevitable destiny, the so-called clash of civilizations that results (often between nations living within a single state) is more a product of self-fulfilling prophecy than it is an act of national Providence.

It is true that where one finds vital nationalist movements, organised religion usually hovers nearby. A common assumption is that it is religion that succumbs to the pull of nationalism, a clear case of the sublime being co-opted by a force more earthy and real to the people than the spiritual transcendence peddled by the priests. Indeed, it is often true that a person's allegiance to their professed religion plays second fiddle to their nation, even when that religion purports to be universal.

Upon closer inspection, however, the picture becomes more complicated. Instead of a primordial nationalism commanding the allegiance of the people above and beyond any religious interloper, the religious dimension is commonly there at the beginning. Many nationalisms do not attempt to hide the religious nature of their self-expression. Others do, but the secular or non-religious rhetoric that accompanies them is usually a later addition, masking a foundational premise. A common engine drives the original creation of nation and the development of the ideology of nationalism, and that engine is theology. More accurately, the origins of the idea of nation and nationalism with which we are familiar today have an anti- or pseudo-theology at their heart, an explicit attempt on behalf of European nationalism's founding fathers to provide an alternative home for the passions that the people used to pour into the Christian Church.

Nationalism has theological roots. The claim that nationalism entered into the world in 1789 is based on the fact that that year witnessed the publication of theologian Abbé Emmanuel Sieyés' pamphlet, "What is the Third Estate?", a revolutionary tract that intentionally used religious terms in relation to the burgeoning national consciousness.[14] For Sieyés, the nation was more than just the ground of politics. It is "the origin of all things". It "exists before all else", independent of "all forms and conditions". Its law, Sieyés argued, is the supreme law. Thus, one of nationalism's first proponents began his task by giving the nation the traditional predicates of God.[15] Sieyés did not produce the supposed divine attributes of the nation out of nothing, however, for behind them lay Rousseau's doctrine of the sovereignty of the people:

> Rousseau is similarly a theologian in disguise, a pseudo-theologian: he attributes superhuman sovereignty to the "volontégénérale".[16]

Often understood by social historians as a political construct referring to the will of the people, Rousseau's "volontégénérale" was, in fact a theological term current at the time, meaning simply the will of God.[17]

The German theologian and social commentator Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was put to death for his involvement in a plot to assassinate Hitler, provides an excellent analysis of this pseudo-theological flavour of nationalism. In his *Ethics* and his *Letters and Papers from Prison*, written while awaiting execution, Bonhoeffer traces the roots of nationalism to the modern revolutionary age.[18] He too consistently notes the "idolatrous" nature of nationalism. Nationalism, he concludes, is a markedly religious form of "western godlessness" in which national affiliation forms part of the people's new "god".[19]

The age of nationalism transferred the absolute character of Christianity to the nation.

That the nation poses as a rival for individuals' ultimate allegiance is not lost on sociologists or theologians. What humans once projected onto their gods, they now entrust to the nation:

> Nationalism … substituted the nation for the deity, the citizen body for the Church and the political kingdom for the kingdom of God, but in every other respect replicated the forms and qualities of traditional religions.[20]

The age of nationalism transferred the absolute character of Christianity to the nation:

> The nation became the supreme and ultimate point of reference both for the individual and for the state as a whole.[21]

As a challenger to religion, the nation offers itself as the dominant institution for formulating individual and cultural identity, and it does so on pseudo-theological grounds.

Nation-talk often betrays a Messianic enthusiasm that draws heavily from Judaeo-Christian roots. As the sociologist Max Weber notes, there is in nationalism "a fervour of emotional influence" that does not have, in the main, a political-economic origin.[22] Instead, nationalism is based upon what he calls "sentiments of prestige".[23] The prestige of a nation is directly linked to the foundational idea (albeit not always

explicitly addressed) of that nation's "mission" to the world. It is, thus, an idea emphasising the notion that a particular nation's culture and spirit is set apart from other nations. Its "culture mission" provides significance to the national group and justifies sentiments of the superiority, or at least irreplaceability, of that nation's cultural values. The nation, with its constructed culture and selective historical memory, assumes for itself an "authentic identity", uniquely distinguished and set apart from other nations, with a divinely-sanctioned role to play in the unfolding of history and the development of humanity.

The narrative of nationalism has been described as a "salvation drama".[24] The Messianic ardour of nationalism is related to the story that identifies and preserves "a people" as distinct from any other "people":

> One of the goals of nationalism is the attainment and maintenance of cultural identity, that is, a sense of a distinctive cultural heritage and "personality" for a given named population.[25]

In order to attain the highest ideal of authentic existence, the main task of the nationalist must be to "discover and discern that which is truly 'oneself' and to purge the collective self of any trace of the 'other'".[26] Hence, the importance of having an "authentic" history which marks out and excludes the influence of any other cultures or admits any recent, opportunistic inventions on behalf of the nationalist dogma. Nationalist history rediscovers, reconstructs and appropriates the communal past in order to become the basis of a "vision of collective destiny", and in so doing, it "offers a kind of collective salvation drama derived from religious models and traditions".[27]

The Messianic fervour and sense of cultural mission is here translated into a story of the grand, possibly inevitable, future for the chosen nation. Following closely on the heels of the story of essential identity comes nationalism's appeal to destiny. It is precisely the problems connected to the dogma of a nation's unique purpose that prompted the Nobel prize-winning historian and economist Amartya Sen to write *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. Sen is concerned with what he calls "civilizational partitioning", that is, the tendency from some quarters to "essentialise" cultures into easily manageable, and supposedly predictable, units. His target is "the odd presumption that the people of the world can be uniquely categorized according to some singular and overarching system of partitioning." The process of identifying the supposed "essence" of a unique culture inevitably leads to speculation about that culture's role and purpose on the world's stage, as well as the assumption that certain nations are destined to clash. Many of the conflicts of the world are sustained through the illusion of a "unique and choiceless identity". [29]

There is no doubt that the essentialist approach is attractive, for it invokes the rich imagery of history and seems to enjoy a depth and gravity of cultural analysis.

Furthermore, the appeal to "destiny" appears to have profundity "in a way that an immediate political analysis of the 'here and now' - seen as ordinary and mundane - would seem to lack".[30] Newspapers and politicians often talk of "British" or "Western" values, as opposed to others, with little reflection on what these values are or how they developed. And yet, as we have seen, the reality of the make-up and construction of cultural identity is always far more fluid and complex than an essentialised version can account for. In other words, this approach is based on an "extraordinary descriptive crudeness and historical innocence".[31] Cultural generalisations are limited and do not provide a good basis for predicting the future:

> When a hazy perception of culture is combined with fatalism about the dominating power of culture, we are, in effect, asked to be imaginary slaves to an illusory force.[32]

essence identity and abstraction

The move inherent in all nationalisms towards naming the essential identity of the nation and, from there, going on to claiming unique culture mission for that nation betrays a tendency towards abstraction. This is particularly important insofar as nationalism undermines civil society by shifting attention away from the immediate - from particular people with particular needs in their particular circumstances - and replacing it with a grandiloquent dream of national essence and destiny. This charge of abstraction is counterintuitive to many who wish to emphasise the earthy reality of their national culture, rooted in myth, history and ethnicity. And yet, any attempt to direct attention towards the targets of nationalism is, in effect, to misdirect attention away from the existence of the complex of narratives, history and people that have been deselected in order to arrive at "the" nation.

Nationalism tends towards abstraction in the way that it (i) subsumes individuals into a collective identity, (ii) exhibits selective memory and use of history, and (iii) makes easy assumptions relating to the ethnic and cultural distinctions between nations. Abstraction in these areas detracts from engagement with the practical realities and problems of everyday community life - the "ordinary and mundane" facts of existence - that every flourishing society needs. In this way, abstraction leads to instability, and no community can thrive long on instability without descending into factions and even violence. It is worth focusing a little on each of the three aspects of abstraction mentioned above.

First, nationalism abstracts individuals when it subsumes their identity into that of the group, while at the same time claiming to be providing solid ground for that

identity. Nationalism tells the story of its own national identity by co-opting, and claiming definitive rights over, the identity of its individuals. For example, for the Axis nations "Japan to the Japanese [and] Germany to the Germans" was something far more personal and profound than a territorial-political structure termed a state; it was an embodiment of the nation-idea and therefore an extension of the self".[33] In nationalism's doctrine, the destiny of "the people" takes priority over that of any one individual in that group. Within a social context, there are negative implications for personal identity when the national idea is taken to constitute not part of what goes into establishing an individual's identity, but is, instead, considered to account for the whole of who a person is. The American political writer George Kateb refers to "group-sustaining fictions" which "offer to help persons carry the burden of selfhood, of individual identity". The greatest part of the burden is "the quest for meaningfulness, which is tantamount to receiving definition of the self".[35] Nationalisms act as group-sustaining fictions in that they provide the what, why and wherefore for their individual adherents, demanding only allegiance in return. And yet, nationalisms are created from judiciously selected historical facts and information. They are, as such, an abstraction and cannot, ultimately, account for the myriad influences that actually constitute a person's identity.

The abstractions offered by nationalism are particularly problematic for modern democratic countries such as the United Kingdom, composed as they are of a multitude of cultures living within one state. The nationalist ethos substitutes the reality of the complex and diverse nature of culture with an essentialist and simplistic vision. This has observable effects on civic society, for in a social context, nationalist abstraction also leads towards alienation. Either a person will not be able to recognise herself in the story that the nation tells about itself, or she will identify herself so completely with the nation that she fails to recognise the true make-up and provenance of her home culture. In both cases, this can only serve to alienate persons from their real social context. This is a problem, for if democratic societies are to flourish, individual persons need to feel that they have a stake in their community in order to participate as active citizens. And for those who do participate, the engagement is wasted unless it is directed towards the actual needs of the society.

Human beings need to tell stories about themselves and their communities. We could not stop relating our historical, artistic, religious and familial narratives, even if we wanted to. The problem for society does not arise because nations are a product of narratives, but rather when nationalists attempt to create an ideology based on one strand of the narrative as if it were an inviolable fact of nature, the only strand that matters. Nation provides the context in which individuals think, live and work. Nationalism turns this framework into a dogma. Sen distinguishes between the circumstance of culture and the allowing of it to determine the overriding ideology of a people:

> Even though certain basic cultural attitudes and beliefs may influence the nature of our reasoning, they cannot invariably determine it fully.[36]

This, of course, does not deny the importance culture plays in our behaviour and thinking. But, with Sen, we should be sceptical about the way national culture is seen, rather arbitrarily, "as the central, inexorable, and entirely independent determinant" of a society.[37] There is great variation within one cultural milieu, and culture does not stand still:

> The temptation toward using cultural determinism often takes the hapless form of trying to moor the cultural anchor on a rapidly moving boat.[38]

The closer one gets to acknowledging the debt owed to multiple contributors, the closer one gets to the full reality of what it takes to make a "nation".

National culture is a many-splendoured thing, with complex relations and hidden influences. The closer one gets to acknowledging the debt owed to multiple contributors, the closer one gets to the full reality of what it takes to make a "nation" and the role that it plays in the formation of one's own identity. One need only look at the awkward position that supporters of the British National Party (peddlers of the idea of "pure" British ethnicity) find themselves, in the face of research identifying black West African genes in white Yorkshiremen, who can trace their English surname back to the mid-fourteenth century,[39] or that of Robert Kilroy-Silk, politician and erstwhile television presenter, who published an article entitled "We Owe the Arabs Nothing" in a national newspaper, arguing that Arabic culture had made no contribution to English society.[40] Mr Kilroy-Silk's essentialist conception of "nations" whose cultures operate independently of each other was challenged by those who pointed out that English culture (and indeed Kilroy-Silk's own employment as a paid journalist) would be unrecognisable without such Arabic contributions as the transmission of Aristotelian philosophy on which English law and ethics are partly based; the herbs, spices and food preparation techniques bequeathed to the English via trade with various Arab cultures; and multiple literary and algebraic innovations, such as the numerical symbol for zero. By failing to recognise the true nature of their own society, and the numerous cultural narratives that provide the framework for who they are today, nationalist commentators abstract themselves from the reality of the very nation that they claim to represent.

conclusion

Nations are constructed communities, cultural productions kept alive by symbols, ethnic memory, myth and common consent. As such, the nation usefully provides an important part of the context for individual identity. However, nationalism turns this framework into a dogma. Modern states are composed of many nations, each contributing to the life and identity of the other. Thus, nationalism, with its doctrine of independence and unique essence, is a force that often works against the state, not in service to it. In order to attain the highest ideal of "authentic existence", nationalism seeks to purge its story of any trace of other influences that might challenge its claim to overarching identity. In so doing, it reveals a pseudo-theological notion of national destiny, an illusory notion which consistently leads to factions, violence and social instability, both within the national group and without. In short, nationalism is an abstraction from reality, alienating persons from their own social context. The nationalist ethos serves to undermine rather than support a stable, healthy, modern civic society.

chapter 2 - references

1 Key dates of the growth of the idea of nationalism include 1775 (First Partition of Poland), 1776 (American Declaration of Independence), 1789 and 1792 (the two phases of the French Revolution) and 1807 (Fichte's *Address to the German Nation*). J Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith (eds.), *Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 5

2 Walker Conner, "A Nation is a nation, is a state, is an ethnic group, is a…" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (October 1978) pp. 377-400, p. 384

3 AD Smith , "The Nation: Real or Imagined?" in *People, Nation, State*, E Mortimer (ed.), (IB Tauris, 1999), p. 37

4 see Conner, 1978, p. 379

5 Conner, 1978, p. 383-4

6 Hutchinson and Smith, 1994, p. 4

7 Ernest Barker, *National Character and the Factors in its Formation* (Methuen: London, 1927), p. 173, emphasis added

8 Melanie Phillips, *Londonistan* (Gibson Square, 2006), p. 111. See *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: Parekh Report* (Profile Books, 2001)

9 Phillips, 2006, p. 112. See Leo McKinstry, The *Spectator*, 24 September 2005

10 Eric Hobsawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983), ch.1, cited in Smith 1999, p. 39

11 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Verso, 1991), ch. 3, cited in Smith, 1999, p. 39

12 Smith, 1999, pp. 36-37,39

13 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Blackwell, 2006), pp. 55-56. See also Smith, 1998, p. 42

14 Heinrich Schneider, "Patriotism and Nationalism" in *Concilium: Religion and Nationalism*, J Coleman and Miklós Tomka (eds.), (SCM, 1995), p. 38

15 Schneider, 1995, p. 38

16 Schneider, 1995, p. 38

17 Schneider, 1995, p. 39

18 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, E Bethge (ed.), trans. Neville Horton Smith (SCM, 1955), p. 80

19 Bonhoeffer, 1955, p. 82

20 Smith, 1998, p. 98

21 Victor Conzemius, "Universal Christian Faith and Nationalism" in *Concilium*, p. 19

22 Max Weber, "The Nation" in *Essays in Sociology* (Routledge, 1948), p. 171

23 Weber, 1948, pp. 173-76

24 Anthony D Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (Routledge, 1998), p. 43

25 Smith, 1998, p. 90

26 Smith, 1998, p. 44

27 Smith, 1998, p. 90

28 Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Allen and Lane, 2006), p. xii

29 Sen, 2006, p. xv

30 Sen, 2006, p. 43

31 Sen, 2006, p. 58

32 Sen, 2006, p. 103

33 Conner, 1978, p. 385, emphasis added

34 see Smith, 1998, p. 99

35 George Kateb, *Patriotism and Other Mistakes* (Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 4-5

36 Sen, 2006, p. 34

37 Sen, 2006, p. 112

38 Sen, 2006, p. 113

39 New Scientist, January 2007

40 Sunday Express, 4 January 2004

3

patriot

The problems with nationalism and the abstract, alienating implications of nationalist ideology for a healthy society, are recognised by many commentators. When it is politically dominant in a society, nationalism shows little concern for "different" neighbours or strangers, consistently tending towards some form of xenophobia.[1] The emphasis on ever-narrowing definitions of who is, or who is not, part of a particular nation produces internal schisms within a society, as well as fractious relations with other societies.

One attempted solution to the problem of nationalism is to replace the emphasis on individual nations with a universalistic emphasis on "mankind" in general. Many commentators rightly point out, however, that the rhetoric of universal brotherhood is hardly a rival to the abstractions of nationalism. Universalism is not a practical doctrine for human populations, bounded as we are to particular places and geographies, with diverse histories, religions, cultures and politics. For this reason, commentators are often loath to abandon all talk of cultural allegiance and affiliation. Members of a society seem to need some sense of common identity if their community is to flourish. If bland, content-less universalism is no answer to nationalism, perhaps patriotism is?

patriots and civic patriotism

Gordon Brown is among many thinkers who see in patriotism a natural middle way. Patriotism, it is argued, is a "new form of particularity". It escapes the blood and ethnic ties of nationalism and focuses instead on the rational construction of state. It is "a particular loyalty compatible with universal reasonable values",[2] thereby treading the line between dangerous specificity and useless generality. Patriotism diverts attention away from the components of nation (blood ties, ethnicity and myth) and focuses it instead onto the apparatus of state, such as constitution, law and rational symbols. Whereas nationalism is love of nation, it is argued that patriotism is love of country.

Civic patriotism is supposed to be an alternative to nationalism in a number of key ways. First, it places emphasis on the intentional political identity of citizens within a free state, as opposed to the unwitting cultural and ethnic identities of nationalism. Second, where nationalism tends towards tighter conceptions of exclusivity, patriotism is thought to be more socially inclusive. Third, patriotism is closely connected to the what of the state - its democratic form and constitutional status. Nationalism is more concerned with who wields power in any state, and is ultimately indifferent to democracy or rule of law, as long

as the "right" nation runs the country. With civic patriotism, loyalty to the state is specifically set against loyalty to the nation, and it is supposed that in this way "patriotism saves populations from nationalism".[3] With his emphasis on "shared civic values" and repudiation of "a wrongheaded 'cricket test' of loyalty" based on "race and ethnicity", Gordon Brown has clearly placed his flag in the civic patriotism camp.[4]

Patriotism diverts attention away from the components of nation (blood ties, ethnicity and myth) and focuses it instead onto the apparatus of state.

a successful alternative?

Does patriotism, in fact, provide an alternative to the problems posed by nationalism? In moral and ethical terms, there is undoubtedly a real difference between the two. The vision for society coming from patriots and mainstream national party politicians is not the same as that coming from extreme factions like the BNP. In motives and actions, patriots are not the same as nationalists, and there is clearly no covert nationalist agenda behind the renewed interest in patriotism as the "glue" that holds society together, that has been expressed by so many politicians over recent years.

Just as with our previous discussion of "nationalism", it is possible to offer an analysis of the idea of patriotism without assuming the worst of all patriots. Likewise, it is possible constructively to critique aspects of patriotism without being dismissed outright as anti-patriotic or anti-social. Accordingly, our argument is that certain expressions of patriotism potentially undermine the very society that these patriots purport to champion. Given the current interest in patriotism, not least in the speeches and writing of the new Prime Minister, it is legitimate to question whether patriotism really does provide the motivation and necessary tools needed to cultivate the kind of civil society that Gordon Brown wants to see. Does patriotism - at least as it is commonly expressed - fully escape the problems of nationalism for which it is the supposed solution? Furthermore, can patriotism really bear the load that it is expected to in civic life?

In some important ways, the answer to these questions is no. Looking first at the problem of the relationship between "nationalism" and "patriotism" (at least as that term is commonly used in public discourse), we see that patriotic language and ideas often draw from the same well as those of nationalism, despite the intention to avoid them. Perhaps unwittingly, commentators who wish to promote patriotic fervour, while avoiding nationalism, often use "nation" language of myth, destiny and inherited ethnic tradition when they are talking about the state and its institutions. This is despite the fact that many think it straightforward that patriotism as "loyalty to one's group and zeal for its defence" is totally different from the outlook of nationalism.[5] For these civic patriots, patriotism is not supposed to rely on a particular anthropology or doctrine of individual relations as nationalism does. Yet, as we shall see, it would seem that it is these very things that

patriotic rhetoric manifestly does rely on. The reality is that patriotism, understood as a rational, constitutional allegiance to the strictly political, "state" structures of a society, has a close relationship with the nationalist ideas of particularity, sentiment and selective memory. Because of the difficulty in keeping the two apart, patriotic rhetoric and ideas often slide into nationalistic expression, thereby flirting with the hazards of nationalism discussed above.

Part of the problem lies in the fact that patriotic notions of citizenship are based on ideas of civic duty and allegiance to a specific legal and cultural entity, which themselves have their roots in the Greco-Roman idea of *patria* and *res publica*. *Patria* refers both to the father as head of a family, and to the land and property associated with that paternal authority.[6] The combined qualities of emotional "family" affection and abstract loyalty towards a "legal" entity have remained part of what has been called "the curious conceptual baggage" of patriotism to the present day.[7] Love of the particular homeland and family unit is an intrinsic part of the concept of *patria*, a sentiment that arises partly to compensate for the remoteness of the impersonal, generalised entity of the *res publica*, or shared public sphere. The emotive/familial as a target of allegiance is not overtaken by the rational/legal, but instead they exist - sometimes uneasily - side by side.

"On paper", civic patriotism assumes that humans are more rational than is actually the case. In practice, the patriotic story that is often told to enforce or shore-up sentiments of loyalty and identity is composed of elements similar to nationalism. Like nationalism, patriotism assumes a "theoretical cultural homogenization", seen, for example, in Mr Brown's language of an overarching British identity that cares more about citizenship than ethnicity. However, despite its language of rational/objective allegiance to laws and states, in reality the citizen is being asked to identify herself morally and emotionally with one particular form of life. The laws and ethical rules that are the supposed objects of patriotic affection did not fall from the sky. They themselves are deeply rooted in the collective (un)consciousness of an historical community. In other words, pledging allegiance to a flag is not simply a way to unite disparate groups around a neutral, objective symbol. It itself represents a complex web of cultural, historical and even religious assumptions and developments.

Despite the best intentions of many civic patriots to provide a common ground in which citizens of all types can convene, in reality the demand of patriotic allegiance is also based upon an expectation of cultural affiliation. And, whether made explicit or not, such an invitation to affiliate with one culture is also at the same time an implicit demand to disaffiliate with another culture. While this may not be a problem in itself (many people are happy to exchange one form of cultural identification for another), it is naive if politicians expect that such a transition can happen as a matter of course, and without repercussions, equally throughout society. These problems have been too blithely overlooked by many proponents of patriotism, prompting one commentator to note: "the mundane messy reality of diversity does not seem to have been registered by modern [civic patriots]".[8]

It might well be the case that the ethical rules associated with a particular culture are preferable to the rules of another culture. The life of modern, liberal, tolerant Britain is undoubtedly better than many other options at play today on the world's stage. This is not in debate. What is at issue is the attempt to surmount cultural differences within one country in the name of patriotism. It only begs the question when people assume that an appeal to a common patriotism will solve the problems caused by different cultures sharing the same social landscape. It is more likely that the opposite is true. As seen in the hard knots of cultural ghettos currently dotting Britain's multicultural landscape, requiring patriotic loyalty to a dominant culture will inevitably lead to defensive regrouping, and not integration, of the various groups living within that culture. Overarching patriotic visions tend to fuel reactive sentiments of nationalistic isolation; they do not provide an alternative.

Because it requires an element of cultural homogenization and identity formation, patriotism also does not escape the charge of abstraction, causing one commentator to maintain that patriotism - using the commonly understood definition of "love of country" - is a mistake.[9] The mistake lies in the common assumption that the target of allegiance - the country - is sure and solid, an object easily identified by common sense. Upon closer inspection, however, its existence is more complicated than that, as evinced by anyone who tries to define what, exactly, this thing is that one is supposed to love. Countries are "best understood as an abstraction … a compound of a few actual and many imaginary ingredients… A country is not a discernable collection of discernible individuals like a team or a faculty or a local chapter of a voluntary organisation." Of course, a country has a "rational" place, a setting, a landscape, cities, a climate and so on. But countries are also a construction of culture and their identities are composed of a mix of false and true memories, real and imagined histories. There is not a country on earth whose "story" the inhabitants tell has not been embellished, sanitized or purified in some way in order to encourage allegiance or justify some cultural practice or other.[10] Such an attitude often appears in quasi-religious expression:

> I vow to thee my country, all earthly things above,
> Entire and whole and perfect, the service of my love:
> The love that asks no question, the love that stands the test,
> That lays upon the altar the dearest and the best;
> The love that never falters, the love that pays the price,
> The love that makes undaunted the final sacrifice.[11]

The telling of purified, idealised and constructed stories might well be a natural and inevitable fact of human groups, but it does not for that reason automatically make allegiance to these stories a stable foundation for engaging with the realities of modern society.

Like nationalism, patriotic abstraction occurs in the construction of the target of its affection. Even if the feelings of affiliation are not overtly focused on race or ethnicity, they

are still focused on things that are the result of selective historical memory. And any act of selection involves multiple deselections of elements that do not fit the preferred patriotic picture. By telling you who you are and what you should love, patriotic narratives can make comprehensive claims of singular identity that are a few steps removed from the messy reality of what a country, and a person, actually is.

Even when patriotism is opposed to nationalism, it often finds itself appealing to "a kind of communal identity formation" that depends, in part, on a story of people and place "to provide both identity and direction to the citizen-ideal."[12] In order to avoid content-less generalizations, "people and place" inevitably becomes "The people and A place". Nationalism and modern concepts of civic patriotism exist in a condition of both conflict and mutual interdependence and influence.[13] One need only look at the flagship of constitutional patriotism to see this relation in effect, and so it is to the United States that we now turn for a consideration of patriotism in action. As well as demonstrating a slide from the patriotic to the nationalistic ethos, such a study also highlights the fact that as a foundational ethos and motivation for citizenship, patriotism does not necessarily deliver the goods.

case study: USA

The United States endorses a form of rational civic patriotism that is, theoretically, an alternative to "primitive" nationalism. Political commentators routinely look to the United States as their prime example of a society fuelled by civic patriotism. Gordon Brown is no exception, when he talks of "taking citizenship seriously" and refers to America as his positive example.[14] America, he thinks, is a model of a country that defines itself "by values that [its] citizens share in common".[15] Mr Brown explicitly ties these citizen values to the apparatus of patriotism, urging Britain to emulate special patriotic holidays such as 4 July, and to find a British equivalent rallying point to the "American flag in every garden".[16] Significantly, Mr Brown often compares Britain to others in relation to national identity and destiny. We know that other countries have a strong sense of national purpose, even a sense of their own destiny. And so should we.[17]

Considering his consistent appeal to US-style patriotism, it is not too much to presume that by "other countries" Mr Brown means, first and foremost, the United States of America. For these reasons it is a valid line of enquiry to consider first whether American patriotism is sufficiently distant from the nationalist atmosphere that Mr Brown and others oppose, and second, whether civic patriotism does, in fact, contribute to the citizenship ethos in American life. Can the patriot be so easily translated into the sort of citizen who embodies liberty, responsibility and fairness?

It has already been suggested above, that, theoretically, civic patriotism shares many of the same elements as nationalism, and, thus, that it shares in nationalism's weakness as a stable foundation for society. The theory is borne out in the practice of the American

experience. Civic patriotism's hypothetical appeal is to the rational, even objective, aspects of the state and its "goods" that all people in the country can sign up to. Its advantage over nationalism is supposed to be that it eschews the demands of affiliation to a particular cultural or ethnic group in order to belong. And yet, as the political philosopher Charles Taylor has noted, mere appeals to democracy, justice, equality and constitution are too "thin" even for a country that places such a high value on the above named political goods.[18]

Almost as soon as it was introduced, the USA's model patriotism relied on the symbolism of nationalism and nation-states, including appeals to founding fathers and myths, religiously endowed symbols and ideals and references to historical or quasi-historical narratives with ancestral/ethnic overtones. So, for example, Benjamin Franklin expressed his resentment of German immigrants in his new America. "They will never adopt our language or customs," he wrote, "any more than they can acquire our complexion."[19] For Charles Taylor, such a drift was inevitable. "Nationalism has become the most readily available motor of patriotism." The American Revolution was not nationalist in intent. Later, however, "so much did nationalism become the rule as a basis for patriotism that the original pre-nationalist societies themselves began to understand their own patriotism in something like nationalist terms."[20]

The American political scientist Deborah Schildkraut's recent study, examining conceptions of US identity in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks, compared the official or "elite" conception of American identity with the "mass", or popular conceptions. She concluded that the elite idea of America is identified with an "inclusive, incorporationist" tradition, analogous to the ideals of civic patriotism, while the popular version of American identity betrays "ascriptive" tendencies, in the sense that it sees identity primarily in the light of cultural and ethnic affiliation. Schildkraut reports that "lingering ethnocultural conceptions of American identity have been awakened by the attacks." Despite the academic desire to see American national culture as being "decoupled from ethnicity, separated from religion and detached even from race",[22] the reality seems to be that this decoupling exists more in theory than in practice:

> The place of race, ethnicity and religion in determining what people think it means to be an American is still very much an active debate.[23]

The idea that American identity is defined by white Protestantantism rooted in Northern European heritage and ancestry has, of course, been criticised and challenged over the years. However, studies show that this WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) image continues to play a powerful role in what Americans themselves think of as "American". So, for example, in the 1996 General Social Survey, 55% of the respondents said that being Christian was important in making someone a "true American" and 70% said the same thing about being born in America. The study also showed that white Americans revealed a tendency to assume that people who did not fit the stereotypical WASP identity were foreigners, despite the fact that these "foreigners" enjoyed full legal citizenship as Americans.[24]

The aftermath of 11 September saw a rise in "patriotically" motivated violence and disparagement of non-white American citizens. A number of Sikh and Hindu citizens mistaken for Muslim Arabs were attacked.[25] This, of course, was in addition to the persecution and hostility directed against Arab Americans themselves, who faced an estimated 270 violent assaults within a month of the September attacks, including the case of the Yemeni shopkeeper, gunned down within sight of the US flag hanging in his shop. California recorded 73 official hate crimes against "people perceived to be Arabs" in 2001, compared with only 3 the year before.[27]

After studying similar reports and research in the wake of 11 September, Schildkraut concludes that "in line with theories of nationalism, the rest of society at large … has been slow to [adopt inclusive ideas] because of the enduring power of racial and ethnic stereotypes, which become even more powerful in the face of threats to the nation".[28] In the face of those who suggest that the American "civic" experience trumps "national" formulations of identity, it is significant that at a time when expressions of American patriotism were at their height just after the attacks - with support for the President reaching historic levels and American flags in abundance - the popular sense of American identity was often expressed in terms of race and religion in conjunction with the symbolic furniture of civic patriotism.

This is not confined to the relatively rarefied atmosphere of a nation under attack from Islamic extremists, however. Similar attitudes have surfaced in the light of increased Mexican and Hispanic immigration. Antonio Swad, for example, faced numerous death threats over his decision to accept Mexican pesos at his chain of pizza restaurants in Dallas, Texas.[29] Swad's "Pesos for Pizzas" campaign, intended to capitalise on the cross-border traffic of Mexicans visiting their American relatives, brought in thousands of complaints from a population already exercised over such issues as a Spanish-language version of the Star-Spangled Banner and similar worries about the Hispanic threat to Anglo-Saxon cultural dominance.

Hispanics are already the fastest growing minority in the US. Through birth and legal immigration, they now account for half of all new US citizens. Americans of European origin are already minorities in the states of Texas and California. The mantra of civic patriotism maintains that all citizens of the country are united under reasonable common points of allegiance, uncoupled from race, religion or ethnic culture. This is not the version of American identity often in evidence in the face of Hispanic Americans seen to be encroaching on White Americans. Tim O'Hare, for example, a fifth generation Texan, patriot and self-described "devout Christian and Republican", is the councillor responsible for draconian laws designed to exclude Hispanics from his suburban hometown of Farmers Branch:

> They don't love America. They don't take pride in America. They don't assimilate, many of them. They don't embrace American values and culture.[30]

civic religion

The pseudo-theological facet of nationalism is also present in the patriotic expressions of American "civic religion". In his 2005 book *God's Politics* (for which Gordon Brown provided a front-cover endorsement) the American theologian and social activist Jim Wallis lambasted the US political culture (of the Left and of the Right) for its use of Christian symbolism and ideas. His book contains a chapter on the "dangerous theology" of empire, in which he highlights the rhetoric emerging from President George W Bush, and subjects it to special criticism:

> It is one thing for a nation to assert its raw dominance in the world; it is quite another to suggest, as this president does, that the success of American military and foreign policy is connected to a religiously-inspired "mission" and even that his presidency may be a divine appointment for a time such as this.[31]

Tony Carnes made a similar point in *Christianity Today* magazine: "Some worry that Bush is confusing genuine faith with national ideology".[32] The *Christian Century* agreed:

> What is alarming is that Bush seems to have no reservations about the notion that God and the good are squarely on the American side.[33]

On a similar note, journalist Michelle Goldberg investigated the christianised world-view of her conservative, "Red State" compatriots, seeking to uncover the culture that lies behind the words of her country's elected leader and was shocked to find a culture espousing a patriotism that was militant and Christian.[34]

When commentators express surprise at particular pronouncements from certain presidents, or ascribe these sentiments to fringe, fundamentalist subcultures, they fail to appreciate the depth and breadth of these ideas in present-day, mainstream America. The sense of America's "chosen" status, its favoured place in history and its famous claim to "exceptionalism" runs deep in the American cultural psyche, Left and Right, Christian and non-Christian alike. The idea is not systematic, but it is pervasive. It does not have a single source or author, but it does appear regularly from multiple voices and at multiple times. It has not been explicated dogmatically, but its core themes reoccur with remarkable consistency. It comes from a Chosen People ideology, bolted onto a liberal doctrine of the progression of history, cemented by a thoroughly Enlightenment vision of modern nations and national identity. In short, the result is a civic religion which has clear relationships to the pseudo-theology of nationalism's "culture mission", complete with Messianic overtones. As Senator Albert J Beveridge, Pulitzer prize-winning historian and ally of President Theodore Roosevelt wrote:

> Almighty God … has marked the American people as the chosen nation to finally lead the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America … we are the trustees of the world's progress, guardians of the righteous peace.[35]

Religious appropriation of "state" apparatus is also in evidence, for example, when influential broadcaster and political enthusiast Pat Robertson maintains that America is a Christian nation and, thus, that "studying the constitution is like studying the Bible".[36] Popular twentieth century evangelist Billy Sunday said: "Christianity and patriotism are synonymous terms." He would often end his sermons by jumping onto the pulpit and waving the American flag.[37] In 1995, during the push to protect the US flag by drafting laws that intentionally used theological terms such as "sacralisation" and "desecration", Congressman Bill Young said: "alone of all flags, it has the sanctity of revelation".[38] In this light, it seems that the common collusion of faith with national ideology, and the equation of God with the American Way are not evidence of a deviation from theology, so much as the fruit of a religious idea long at the heart of American patriotic self-identity, a culture quite comfortable with equating its nation with divine destiny.

patriots and citizens

From the US example, we can see how patriotism often fails to avoid the problems more commonly associated with nationalist sentiment. Perhaps more alarmingly, patriotism also fails to deliver the goods of civil society that are, in the mind of Gordon Brown and others like him, one of its central objectives. If it is, indeed, the case that civic patriotism is a prime motor for a healthy civil society, then it is appropriate to look for some indication of this in the American experience.

In modern democracies, voting is not the only way to signal one's participation in society, but it is the primary expression of citizenship. In tracking lines of civic participation, voting records also have the benefit of being relatively quantifiable. In 2000, and again in 2004, after widely reported presidential elections touted by both the Democrats and the Republicans as the most important elections of their generation, hardly half of the adult US population voted. In both contests, marked by extreme partisan activism and lobbying, close to 100 million eligible Americans did not participate. Overall, voter turnout in 2004 was at 51% and, although this rose to 59% in 2004, it was still far short of turnout levels in other countries that same year, such as El Salvador (66%), Spain (77%) and Indonesia (81%).[39]

In a further trend that should give civic patriots who value local empowerment pause for thought, voter turnout in America is even less for more local elections. The 2002 Congressional elections saw about a 40% turnout, even though control of the House and Senate hung in the balance.[40] Nor is this a recent blip. Mark Franklin, in *Comparing Democracies*, contrasted the average turnout for elections to the lower house of legislature or parliament in 37 countries between 1960 and 1995. France (76%), Canada (76%) and the United Kingdom (75%) all saw participation significantly higher than the US, with 54%.[41] The low voter turnout in America does not simply seem to be a product of dissatisfaction with particular politicians. Research has indicated that turnout is not linked

to mistrust of government or dissatisfaction with "the system". Turnout declined among the trusting and the cynical alike. In other words, even those willing to express support for the machineries of state were no more likely to participate in the process than others.[42]

A positive feature of American life has historically been the vibrancy of its community life, the wealth of what nineteenth century French historian and political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville called its associations and its generosity of spirit. Americans were an "outward" nation of joiners and club-builders, constructing, in the process, an immense reservoir of social capital and civic trust. Yet, as Robert Putnam noted in his groundbreaking study *Bowling Alone*, those reservoirs of social capital are running dangerously dry.[43] Concern for community has been replaced, over the past few decades, with a marked growth in American individual self-regard and introversion. Collective acts, from sports' attendance to theatre, have declined. Participation in marches and civil demonstrations is nowhere near what it was in the 1960s.

Gordon Brown and others recognise the key part that responsibility, in relation to liberty and in service of fairness, plays in the life of the civic society. How does this relate to US society? Income inequality in America is endemic. The gap between the top 10% and the bottom 10% of earners is so large that those 10% at the bottom are considerably poorer than the bottom 10% in most other industrialised countries. In a 2000 study on the poverty levels in the populations of advanced capitalist economies, the US ranked behind 18 other countries, even while it enjoyed the highest average per capita incomes.[44] Less than one in three Americans agrees with the notion that civic society has a responsibility for income inequality or guarantee of income for the poorest.[45]

That said, it is important to note that, at an individual level, charitable giving is higher in America than in any other industrialised country. A major study by the Charities Aid Foundation found that the amount that individuals give as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stands at 1.7% in America, as against, for example, 0.73% in the UK and 0.14% in France.[46] The study found an inverse correlation between individual giving and the size of social welfare provision in their country.

In the US, however, this counterbalance of individual giving levels is complicated by the fact that a relatively small number of very wealthy individuals give large amounts, thereby distorting the overall figures. According to the Charities Aid Foundation, "it is likely that the distribution of wealth and the wealth gap in countries is important. The wide wealth gap in the US may partly explain its high level of giving."[47]

A sense of responsibility for other civic structures is also in decline. The US possesses the best doctors and hospital facilities in the world, and yet 43 million of its people remain without any form of health insurance. Those that do vote, regularly vote to reject moves towards nationalised healthcare and even the idea of national healthcare remains controversial for politicians.[48]

Accessible education is also in trouble. A 1973 Gallup poll showed 58% expressing "a good deal/quite a lot of confidence" in public schools. When the question was repeated in 2003, pollsters saw the number fall to 40%. In the analysis of these figures, the American social scientist Morris Florina comments: "part of the problem is simple self-interest".[49] American citizens are increasingly choosing to remove their support and contact from these schools and, as with healthcare, who that do vote consistently vote for less money to go to the public system. The result is a negative effect not just on children's education, but on the average American's awareness of her context and role as a citizen. A 2003 poll done by the "Representative Democracy in America Project" revealed widespread ignorance amongst US citizens about their own country. Only one in three adults over the age of 36 could identify the party controlling their state legislature. Less than one quarter could identify the speaker of the House of Representatives. More than a third could not even identity the political party in charge of the country. Young people did even worse in their answers.[50]

International commentators on American society are often lulled into a false sense of the vibrancy of US civic participation, too easily identifying an "engaged citizen" wherever they find a "robust patriot". Reports of highly partisan Red State/Blue State culture wars and the fervour of recent elections tend to paint a picture of a country actively partaking in a passionate, informed debate over the nature of US society. This is not an accurate image, however, as only a minority of Americans identify themselves as Conservative or Liberal, "Red" or "Blue". The majority are "Beige".[51]

There can be no doubt that the US has been remarkably successful in attracting a wide range of immigrants and people groups, many of whom are willing to replace their original national identities for the American version. Home-grown Americans, too, are usually in no doubt as to where their allegiance lies. The accomplishment of the American experiment in instilling a sense of patriotism amongst a variety of nations has brought with it many benefits, not least in its cultural and artistic outputs and a sense of confidence that is rightly celebrated around the world. Similarly, many Americans engage in positive social and cultural endeavours, directly motivated by their identity as Americans: proud to be American and sure of what that means. Yet, the evidence suggests that too many of these same patriots who love their country are, as citizens, disengaged, unaware and uninterested in contributing to the mechanics of their own civil society.

America is, of course, by no means alone in facing major social problems, with most high-income countries experiencing problems relating to social cohesion and order. Europe, in general, and Britain, in particular, shares many of the problems and statistical trends identified in the US, especially in relation to a downward turn in voter participation. Despite Mr Brown's glowing descriptions of local community Britain, a recent YouGov poll found that 71% of Britons currently have no ties to any group or association in their neighbourhood.[52]

The US is an interesting and important case study, however, because it is so very and overtly patriotic. If the relationship between patriotism and citizenship were a true one, we

would expect to see America's civic society in conspicuously good health. We do not. Indeed, in some key ways, such as violent crime and healthcare provision, its society is arguably worse off than many in Europe.

patriotism and the threefold citizen

In laying out his vision for the person engaged in society, Gordon Brown often appeals to patriotism, American and otherwise, with admiration, conceiving of this sentiment as the engine that drives forward a sense of citizenship and civil society. With this in mind, it is worth looking again at what Mr Brown's civil society should look like.

For Mr Brown, the best country will be one in which the threefold values of liberty for all, responsibility by all and fairness to all come to fruition. Of liberty, Mr Brown says that it is "not just passive … but active, people empowered to participate".[53] Furthermore, "Liberty for All" as a slogan needs to be tested against the extent that the citizens have access to the means of liberty. How well does "empowerment" contribute to an individual's development as well as that of society?[54]

If the relationship between patriotism and citizenship were a true one, we would expect to see America's civic society in conspicuously good health. We do not.

Of responsibility, Mr Brown sees that it comes alive in voluntary associations, churches and public service. It provides "the moral space" in which "duty constrains the pursuit of self-interest".[55] Of fairness, he says that it is the pursuit of equality of opportunity for all, unfair privileges for no one. The guarantee of fairness to all can only come from government:[56]

> For the good society to flourish to the benefit of all, private endeavour must be matched by public endeavour.[57]

Gordon Brown's threefold vision of society is appealing and with obvious merits. However, a review of the American experience does not immediately suggest that a patriotic culture lends itself to the sort of civil society that Mr Brown envisions. He says:

> I am not alone in believing that a stronger sense of patriotic purpose would help resolve some of our most important national challenges … and would help us better integrate our ethnic communities, respond to migration and show people the responsibilities as well as rights that must be at the heart of modern citizenship.[58]

The fact that Mr Brown twice claims that patriotism would *help* solve problems is encouraging. Clearly, he does not think that patriotism is any form of social panacea. Yet, his appeal to patriotism's "help" still begs the question, as it is not certain that a sense of patriotic purpose would do the work of modern citizenship that Mr Brown desires.

Although patriotism can generate a positive sense of collective identity, appealing, as it ultimately does, to an allegiance based on essential identity, a unified story, pseudo-theology and national destiny, it is unable fully to counteract the fractious, abstract and alienating atmosphere produced by nationalism. Equally alarmingly, it is quite possible for a sense of deep patriotism to co-exist with a society marked by civic disengagement and extreme inequality. It can, in short, encourage rather than prevent the trends of social isolation currently plaguing Western societies.

The current political interest in patriotic citizenship is, therefore, to be welcomed - with some caution. Civic participation and a sense of collective ownership of society need to be encouraged and supported and, in this regard, patriotism can be positive. But it is not enough. Gordon Brown and others need to go beyond patriotism in their objective of nurturing civil society in Britain.

Interestingly, there is an excellent model for British citizenship already present in Mr Brown's own thought, a model for the socially engaged citizen, which does not need to appeal to abstract and potentially alienating notions of overarching national identity. This model is the "neighbour", to which we now turn.

Civic participation and a sense of collective ownership of society need to be encouraged and supported and, in this regard, patriotism can be positive. But it is not enough.

conclusion

Civic patriotism is seen as an antidote to the problems posed by nationalism. In theory, it purports to focus allegiance on the rational aspects of state and not the emotive aspects of nation. In practice, patriotic language and ideas draw from the same well as those of nationalism, and thus patriotism shares nationalism's weaknesses as a stable base for civic society. Furthermore, the existence of patriotism is no guarantee for good citizenship in society. It is not conclusive that a sense of patriotic purpose will contribute to a civil society which embodies liberty, responsibility and fairness.

chapter 3 - references

1 Andrew Vincent, *Nationalism and Particularity* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 110

2 Vincent, 2002, p. 111

3 Vincent, 2002, pp. 114-115

4 See Gordon Brown, *Fabian*

5 See Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (Hutchinson, 1960), pp. 73-74

6 Vincent, 2002, p. 111

7 Vincent, 2002, p. 112

8 Vincent, 2002, pp. 123-24

9 Kateb, *Patriotism*, p. 3

10 Kateb, 2006, p. 8

11 *I Vow To Thee My Country*, lyrics by Cecil Spring-Rice, 1918

12 John Coleman, "A Nation of Citizens" in *Concilium*, p. 54

13 Coleman 1995, p. 48

14 Gordon Brown, "Britishness" in *Moving Britain Forward*, p. 22

15 Brown, *Britishness*, p. ?

16 Brown, *Fabian*

17 Gordon Brown, *Seminar on Britishness*

18 See Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton University Press, 1992)

19 Benjamin Franklin's Letters, quoted in Morris P Florina et al., *America's New Democracy* (Pearson/Longman, 2006), p. 69

20 Charles Taylor, "Nationalism and Modernity"' in R McKim and J McMahan (eds.) *The Morality of Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 40-41

21 Deborah Schildkraut, *Political Psychology*, Vol. 23, No. 3, (2002), p. 512

22 Stanley Renshon, *One America?* (Georgetown University Press, 2001), p. 258

23 Schildkraut, 2002, p. 514. Schildkraut distinguishes between "'race" and "ethnicity", terms that are often confused. In essence, "race" covers the broad family of biological and physical characteristics, while "ethnicity" refers to cultural and linguistic properties. So, for example, the Welsh and the English enjoy different ethnicities but share the same race. The literature on the difference between these terms is long and varied. For some examples see *Nationalism* (eds.) John Hutchinson and Anthony D Smith (Oxford University Press, 1994)

24 Schildkraut, 2002, p. 515. See also R Takaki "Race at the End of History" in *The Good Citizen*, D Batstone and E Medieta (eds.), (Routledge, 1999)

25 B Alpert and B Walsh, *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), 30 September 2001; M Anton , *Los Angeles Times*, 22 September 2001, cited in Schildkraut, 2002, pp. 521-23

26 Karen Breslau, *Newsweek*, 15 October 2001, cited in Florina, 2006, p. 65

27 *Los Angeles Times*, 21 September 2002, cited in Florina, 2006, p. 65

28 Schildkraut, 2002, p. 518

29 Martin Fletcher, *The Times*, 29 March 2007

30 Fletcher, *The Times*

31 Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the American Right gets it wrong and the Left doesn't get it* (Lion, 2005), p. 139

32 Tony Carnes, "The Bush Doctrine" in *Christianity Today*, May 2003, cited in Wallis, 2005, p. 141

33 "George Bush's Religious Rhetoric" in *Christian Century*, March 2003, cited in Wallis 2005, p.141

34 Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The rise of Christian Nationalism* (WW Norton, 2006), p. 8

35 Congressional Record, 56th Congress, 1st session, Vol. 33 p. 711, cited in R Jewett and John S Laurence, *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil: The dilemma of zealous nationalism* (William B Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2003), pp. 3-4

36 Pat Robertson, *America's Dates with Destiny* (Nelson, 1986), p. 90, cited in Jewett and Laurence 2003, p. 143

37 George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (William B Eerdmans, 1991), p. 51

38 Congressional Record, 28 June 1995, H6435, p. 299, cited in Jewett and Laurence 2003, pp. 297-300

39 IFES election guide, www.ifes.org/eguide/turnout/2004.htm

40 Florina, 2006, p. 136

41 Mark, "Electoral Participation" in *Comparing Democracies* (Sage, 1996), p. 218

42 Jack Citrin, "Comment: The political relevance of trust in government" in *American Political Science Review 68* (1974): 973-88, cited in Florina 2006, p. 143

43 RD Putnam *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon and Schuster, 2000)

44 Richard Freeman, *The US Economic Model at Y2K: Lodestar for Advanced Capitalism,* working paper 7757 (National Bureau for Economic research, June 2000), Exhibit 4, cited in Hutton 2002, p. 25

45 Florina, 2006, pp. 77-78

46 Sally Clegg and Cathy Pharoah, *International Comparisons of Charitable Giving* (CAF, 2006)

47 Clegg, 2006, p. 13

48 William Frey et al., *America by the Numbers* (New Press, 2001), p. 172 cited in Hutton 2002, p. 32

49 Florina, 2006, pp. 60-61

50 Florina, 2006, p. 104

51 See Warren Miller, *American National Election Studies Data Sourcebook* 1952-1986 (Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 94

52 YouGov Poll (www.yougov.com), 2 April 2007

53 Gordon Brown, "Liberty, Responsibility and Fairness" in *Moving Britain Forward*, p. 34

54 Brown, *Liberty*, p. 35

55 Brown, *Liberty*, p. 38

56 Brown, *Liberty*, p. 41

57 Brown, *Liberty*, p. 42

58 Gordon Brown, "We Need a United Kingdom," *Daily Telegraph*, 13 January 2007

4

neighbour

A young lawyer once asked a carpenter the secret of life in all its fullness. The tradesman referred the young man to his own laws - love God and love your neighbour as yourself. "Ah yes," said the lawyer, perhaps slyly hoping to find a loophole, "but just who is my neighbour?" In answer, the carpenter told a story of a Hebrew man beset by robbers, left to die by the side of the road. The man's priest passed by and did not help. Likewise, a member of the cultural elite hurried by on the other side of the road. Finally, a foreigner stopped to assist the stricken man. It turned out that the answer to the lawyer's question was that it was not the co-religionist nor the co-nationalist, but the foreigner who recognised a need and did something about it, who was the neighbour.[1]

Jesus' answer has had ramifications for political theory and ethics ever since. Writers such as Augustine, Aquinas and Martin Luther, to pick but a few from the rich mine of Christian tradition, traced the theological implications of Jesus' teaching into the secular, political realm. The result for Western social thought was the suggestion that the "neighbour" could be the basic target of communitarian ethical duty, in contrast with the Greco-Roman conception of the "compatriot". It has never been the case that the neighbour totally replaced the patriot as the primary social unit or vice versa. Instead, the two ideas have existed in tension throughout the history of Western thought. In the light of the rising interest in patriotism, it is worth renewing the "neighbour" tradition that has lately lain dormant in political discourse.

the neighbour in theory

How do the ideas underlying love of neighbour relate to those other loves, of nation and of country, explored above?

The Danish philosopher and social critic Sóren Kierkegaard engaged with this question in a profound way that still has relevance to us today. Writing in the middle of the nineteenth century, Kierkegaard stood at the intellectual and historical point when modern Western notions of nationalism and patriotism were beginning to take a recognisable shape. From this vantage point, Kierkegaard was well placed to trace these concepts to their logical conclusions. He observed that a society's heightened emphasis on "the national character" only leads to more and more divisions over who is worthy of inclusion in the

culture. Such an emphasis, he argued, can never lead to what is really important, namely, the will and ability to live well with those whose social space we share. With this social relationship between persons in mind, Kierkegaard identified the different ways that citizens think of themselves and "love" their society.

In his book *Works of Love*, which is an extended reflection on the concept and command to "love thy neighbour", Kierkegaard distinguishes between the love of passionate preference and the love of neighbour. Passionate preference is the love that is a matter for poets, of strong feelings and that lends itself to extremes.[2] It is the sort of affection for others that is sustained through cultural similarity and shared inclinations. Set against this there is neighbour love, a "Christian" concept different from the pre-Christian Greco-Roman conception, which prefers those who share one's passion. Neighbour love stresses the duty towards one's neighbours irrespective of shared interests or origins. Throughout the book, these two loves, available to society, are compared side by side.

Two main points of difference between passionate preference and neighbour love stand out. The first is the contrast between exclusion and inclusion, which highlights the differing tendencies of the two loves, as they are worked out in a social context. The second is between feelings and duty, which highlights the nature of the love on offer, and offers a way to undertake a right relationship to one's neighbour, even when the sentiment of preference is absent. Kierkegaard's insights provide a good theoretical grounding for favouring "the neighbour" over "the national" model of citizenship and civic life.

exclusion and inclusion

Kierkegaard observed that passion, being a matter of preference and "like for like", has a tendency for further and further delineation of who, exactly, is deserving of love. By contrast, neighbour love is not preferential and there is no question of loving for sameness' sake. Neighbour love can thrive in a situation of difference, able to include many people under its auspices. Whereas the drift of love based on passionate preference is always towards "the one", the drift of neighbour love is always towards "the many".[3]

Kierkegaard's comments here call to mind the criticism made earlier that nationalism is dangerously "essentialist" in outlook. Passionate preference moves towards loving one, essential object. Kierkegaard describes preferential love as being a boundless passion for exclusion directed towards a singular target. Neighbour love cannot do this, as the neighbour will always be part of a multitude. Indeed, it takes "enormous self-willfulness" and acts of deliberate exclusion for the lover to love only according to preference. By reserving love only for those "like himself", the lover has to go to great lengths to ensure that he does not love his neighbours simply because they are his neighbours. The one who loves only according to passionate preference must necessarily reduce his field of vision - he does not allow his range to extend to the people near him, but only to people like him.[5]

Thus, it soon becomes apparent that the singular target of passionate preference is not really another group of people, or even another individual. Ultimately, it is the passionate lover himself that is the real target of the preference, however unconsciously this is worked out. What, after all, is really being admired? Here, Kierkegaard makes the connection between preferential love and self-love within the sphere of civic life. He writes of friends that are friends by virtue of similar customs, characters, occupations, education, etc. "That is, on the basis of the similarity by which they are different from other people."[6] This is a tendency towards self-love as, in it we desire the object of our admiration to admire us back for the very selfsame qualities that we admire in him.[7]

This calls to mind a recent defence of patriotism, in which the political philosopher Maurizio Viroli wrote with approval: "modern citizens … can love their republic if the republic loves them."[8] It is worth noting the self-focused nature of patriotic love that is here in view. One commentator has pointed out that this is a love that "remains largely egocentric… it is a longing for union with an object which will fulfil the promise of self-completion."[9] Such a love can be contrasted with the Christian contribution of "neighbour love", which is not found in those classical formulations of civic life which focus on the compatriot.[10]

The objection might be raised that the new type of neighbour love dislikes passionate preference because Christian thought is spiritual, anti-material and anti-life. In fact, the opposite is true. Neighbour love is posited precisely because it is expansive, world-affirming and people-oriented. The misgivings arise about passionate preference, not because it is focused on the stuff of this life, but because it excludes so many people, withdrawing into tighter and tighter circles of sameness, and, thus, abstraction from reality.[11] The contrast with neighbour love is stark. Love for the neighbour does not seek to make me "one" with the neighbour in some idealistic "united self". Love for the neighbour is a relationship that respects the distinctions that exist between individuals, without pretending to collapse the difference.[12]

Neighbour love has a further advantage over preferential love in that the identification of the subject to be loved is infinitely simpler. The love of preference needs to draw up endless distinctions and exclusions, in order to attain the purest expression of its passion. "If someone goes out into the world to try to find the beloved or the friend, he can go a long way…"[13] Bookshops and libraries devote much space to the subject of defining national identity and cultural allegiance. There is no shelf mark for "neighbour", because her identification is not in question. Kierkegaard remarks that when one is searching for one's neighbour, all one needs to do is open the door and go out:

> The very first person you meet is the neighbour, whom you shall love…There is not a single person in the whole world who is as surely and as easily recognised as the neighbour.[14]

feelings and duty

This aspect of "you shall" demands closer inspection. How can love be anything other than passion, feeling, allegiance and devotion? How can love be a duty?

Kierkegaard is well aware of the potential problems inherent in claiming that authentic love, rather than rising unbidden from the heart, can be directed by the head. The poet who idolizes passion, he says, is quite right to think that to command this sort of love is "the greatest fatuousness and the most preposterous talk".[15] The feelings of passionate preference can never be made a duty.

However, it is possible to turn the subject on its head. If one is not obliged to love, can it even be called love? Again, with the civic context in mind, Kierkegaard suggests that "loving" the beloved is really not love at all, at least, not in any socially practical sense. People get excited about passionate attachment to friends and lovers. "But no one in paganism loved the neighbour; no one suspected that he existed."[16] As an extension of the ego, passionate preference ultimately becomes admiration for the self. Thus, it is suggested that only that which looks outward, and engages with other persons regardless of their similarity to the lover, can properly be deemed love.

Within the realm of patriotism, we can see that preferring one's co-nationals is not a choice particularly worthy of commendation. One's culture is an accident of birth and, thus, being part of a certain culture is not in itself a cause for self-congratulation. This has relevance to the quality of liberty, so prized by Gordon Brown. If freedom of human decision is to have any meaningful importance in civil society, the emphasis must be placed on the exercise of a person's reasonable choice regarding her identity and affiliations, rather than imposing a loyalty to a particular culture merely by dint of her being born there.[17] Human freedom only has value when the decisions on offer are real ones. In our society, this extends to what might be called the liberty of identity - the freedom that individuals have in defining themselves and choosing their groups. A person who is aware of the various cultural influences open to her, and who is legitimately able to choose how much priority to afford to these influences, is enjoying liberty. Simply being born into a particular nation is not, in itself, an exercise in freedom.

Sentiments of allegiance rely on keeping the feelings of affection alive. It is, indeed, true that a command to love in this way is impossible. However, one does not need to drum up feelings in order to love one's neighbour. This is perhaps neighbour love's greatest strength when it comes to everyday social interactions. Of course, the language of neighbourly duty cannot compete with the stirring rhetoric of the patriotic orator, yet this has no bearing on the quality of the love in question. For Kierkegaard, in practical, real terms, neighbour love wins hands down:

> In earnestness and truth [neighbour love] is more tender … than [passionate] love … and more faithful in sincerity than the most celebrated friendship in the alliance.[18]

A social life based on infatuation for the group is far less stable and useful to members of that society than one based on practical regard for others. Civic duty cannot be based on affection for the co-national, created and maintained by self-serving fictions. It must be directed instead at the existing subject in the here and now. As Kierkegaard wrote: "love for neighbour does not want to be sung about - it wants to be accomplished."[19]

Love for neighbour does not want to be sung about - it wants to be accomplished.

Gordon Brown's neighbour in practice

Kierkegaard wrote insightfully about the theory of neighbour love. Gordon Brown's strand of thinking relating to the neighbourly citizen can be seen as a practical and workable application of this theory, for the two are closely linked. There is content to the neighbour that cannot be matched by the rhetorical flourishes of the nation in Mr Brown's speeches. True, the neighbour does not grab headlines or stir the emotions in quite the same way. But, what it lacks in sentimental theory, it gains in solid, concrete practice:

> The call to civic duty and to public service - often impelled by religious convictions - led to the mushrooming of local and national endeavour, of associations and clubs, a rich tradition of voluntary associations, local democracy and civic life. From the guilds, the charities, the clubs and associations … and from the churches, to the municipal provision of public amenities like libraries and parks and then to the mutual insurance societies, trades unions and non-governmental organisations, the British way is to recognise and enhance local initiative and mutual responsibility in civil affairs and to encourage and enhance the status of voluntary and community organisations - Burke's "little platoons" - in the service of their neighbourhoods.[20]

The citizen-as-neighbour is certainly not alien to the British experience or to Mr Brown's vision for society.

Mr Brown's speeches and writings are replete with references to practical reforms in the light of his commitment to the threefold qualities of liberty, responsibility and fairness. These suggestions and policy proposals have a direct bearing on the neighbour model for civic life. Occasionally, Mr Brown makes explicit reference to the benefit to neighbours and neighbourhoods that his policies would have, but even when these references are not overt, his practical proposals consistently draw from the neighbourly - and not the national - aspects of his political philosophy. It is precisely this line of thought that this report seeks to endorse and encourage.

the free neighbour

When talking about the practical ways that government can serve liberty, Gordon Brown's watchwords are "empowerment" and "devolution". Beginning from the top and working down, he proposes to reinvigorate the constitutional reform agenda that Labour began in 1997. In effect, this means that, for Mr Brown, there remains a case for a further restriction of executive power and, in order to "prevent any allegation of arbitrary use of power", restriction in patronage in ecclesiastical and other appointments.[21] Guided by the two principles of "primacy of the House of Commons and the need for accountability of the second chamber", Mr Brown says that he would apply the same approach to the issue of the House of Lords reform.[22]

In the name of liberty, Mr Brown proposes that he would break up "centralised institutions that are too remote and insensitive and so devolve power; to encourage in the name of responsibility the creation of strong local institutions".[23] He points to the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and Mayor of London as examples of how the Labour government has done more to devolve power than any other government, but says he wants to go further. We need, he says, "to look to further devolution of power away from Westminster, particularly to a reinvigoration of local government and to schools, hospitals and the self-management of local services".[24] An empowered local government will, he argues, have the neighbourly effect of restoring local initiative and mutual responsibility in civic affairs, as well as strengthening other local institutions.

Gordon Brown refers to British towns and cities as "centres of initiative influencing our whole country".[25] He wishes to devolve power to these centres in order to create "real self-governed communities". He emphasises the need to "make local accountability work by reinvigorating the democratically elected mechanisms of local areas - local government".[26] For this reason, Mr Brown says that he welcomes the debate on "double devolution", that is, the means to renew participation by following empowerment through to the most local levels. In practice, this includes neighbourhood councils and neighbourhood policing schemes. In addition, Mr Brown's participatory Britain would explore new ways of involving people in decisions, such as citizens' juries or deliberative groups which examine important issues of public policy.[27] Overall, Mr Brown acknowledges that his drive for local empowerment is directly related to his claim (or perhaps wish) that "the people's local sense of belonging is now focused on the immediate neighbourhood".[28]

the responsible neighbour

Gordon Brown's emphasis on localised empowerment does not mask an ideology of raw individualism. Any reform discussions, he says, need to take into account the idea that "individual rights are rooted in ideas of responsibility and community".[29] In this way, he proposes doing more to encourage voluntary initiatives and enhance local responsibility

and community action. Often, in Mr Brown's thought, responsibility for all means corporate social responsibility, including business engagement in voluntary activity. Instead of being a token sideline, he wishes to see corporate responsibility and community participation at the core of a company's work.

Apart from business, Mr Brown values the voluntary sector. He points out the existence of 160,000 registered charities and over 200,000 voluntary organisations in the UK:

> We best reflect our British traditions of civic duty and public service by strengthening our community organisations and making them more relevant to the challenges of today.[30]

One of his schemes to strengthen public service is "Futurebuilders", which aims to help existing charities adapt to the modern world. To encourage these and new social enterprises, Mr Brown proposes a fund for seedcorn finance.[31]

At the individual level, the responsible neighbour takes shape in Mr Brown's thought when he refers to mentoring and befriending programmes:

> Mentoring is a modern expression of civic society at work… We should explore innovative ways - through the Internet, TV, local organisations and personal contact - of recruiting and training mentors…[32]

However, the form of individual participation Mr Brown most often alludes to is his commitment to the creation of a British national community service, which, he hopes, will engage and reward "a new generation of young people from all backgrounds to serve their communities".[33] The most likely time for the community service is the traditional gap year. Yet, Mr Brown does not want to restrict the neighbourly opportunity to those privileged to take a year, before going to university. We should also think of "gap months [and] gap weeks as well as gap years", in aid of giving people time to serve their community. Furthermore, he says, these gap times "should not be available just for those who can afford to pay".[34]

With this scheme in mind, Mr Brown proposes to get religious groups and businesses involved in his new community endeavour. "Today I invite and urge business to match fund £100 million," he said in 2006, "£50 million each from government and business - for long-term funding for this new idea".[35] This commitment to responsibility reveals also a commitment to fairness, with Mr Brown suggesting that we should consider helping those who undertake community service with the costs of their education, "including help with education, maintenance, allowance and tuition fees for those undertaking community work".[35]

the fair neighbour

Gordon Brown's vision of civic Britain is one that is rooted in the various equally shared associations of the establishment. He writes of "the institutions that brought us together, from - at root - a shared monarchy, Parliament and Armed Forces to, more recently, institutions as wide ranging [as] the BBC and the UK-wide pooling of pensions and unemployment risk through National Insurance".[37] Even Britain's economic system, according to Mr Brown, betrays an underlying commitment to a shared system that owes more to fairness than it does to cut-throat individualism.

> Over time Europe's first common market - the United Kingdom - has evolved into something much more deeply ingrained than any of the world's other single markets: the shared connections, common networks and strong cross-border business relationships in financial services and elsewhere now integral to our prosperity".[38]

For Mr Brown, however, it is the National Health Service that best demonstrates this third civic virtue. Run on the philosophy that all should have access to healthcare founded on need, not ability to pay, the NHS is the institution most clearly demonstrating the value of fairness. "Founded on the core values of fairness," this institution belongs in the realm of the citizen neighbour:

> A moment's consideration of the importance of the NHS would tell us that you don't need to counterpose civic society to government… Britain does best when we have both a strong civic society and a government committed to empowering people, acting on the principle of fairness.[39]

Elsewhere on the social landscape, Mr Brown suggests a greater focus on tackling inequalities in job and educational opportunities. Recognising the reality of problems facing diverse Britain, he seeks to drive up the educational attainment of pupils from ethnic minorities and a "more comprehensive new deal effort to tackle unacceptably high unemployment in areas of high ethnic minority populations".[40] In aid of helping integration and fair opportunities, Mr Brown proposes expanding access to English language training, pointing out that the teaching of English is a good role for volunteer and professional community mentors.[41] Here, the local meets the federal, for fairness and equal opportunity need what he refers to as an "enabling government".[42]

Consistently throughout his speeches, Gordon Brown provides examples and practical suggestions that provide content to the idea of civic Britain modelled after the good neighbour:

> This is my idea of Britain today. Not the individual on his or her own living in isolation "sufficient unto himself" but a Britain of creativity and enterprise which is also a Britain of civic duty and public service. And in this vision of society there is a sense of belonging that expands outwards as we grow from family to friends and neighbourhood.[43]

It need hardly be pointed out that such a vision is not anti-patriotic, co-existing as it does with Mr Brown's own extensive pronouncements on his appreciation for the cultures of the United Kingdom. Yet, here we can clearly see a line of thought that goes beyond patriotism and an appeal to overarching national identity. It is a line of thought that is both immensely promising and also free from the need to rely on complicated and potentially divisive arguments about the true nature of Britishness.

Mr Brown's thoughts on freedom, responsibility and fairness in this context help to bring into focus the key theme of this report: a cohesive, secure and contented society depends more on the citizen-as-neighbour than it does on the citizen-as-patriot.

citizenship beyond patriotism

Patriotism is on the national agenda in a serious way for the first time in years. Politicians of every stripe are willing to talk about Britishness and the way it can help build and bind our society. In as far as this signals a shift from recent ambivalence or outright antipathy towards the concept of national identity, the shift is to be welcomed. As this report has continually stressed, national identity may be constructed, but it is no less real or relevant for that. To pretend that it is non-existent or an embarrassing hangover from a less enlightened past is neither wise nor helpful.

That said, this report has also stressed that presenting patriotism with the task of uniting a disparate population and strengthening civil society is to load it with a weight it cannot bear. The discussion of who counts as part of any given nation or who is a proper patriot is never fully resolved, not least due to the ever-shifting nature of nation and/or patria. The debate as to what exactly does and does not constitute "national identity" is exhausting and endless. Nations are actual, influential and important, to be sure, but they are also intangible and abstract. As a basic, concrete unit for ethical duty, the "co-nationalist" leaves much to be desired. Small wonder that discussions of Britishness so often run quickly into the mud of what Britishness actually means.

This report has argued that the neighbourly model circumvents many of these problems. The neighbour is not defined primarily by shared culture, language or race, thereby easy to dismiss if she does not satisfy such criteria. Rather, she is tangible and present, her needs understandable, her contribution to society observable, for the simple fact that she lives nearby. At its most basic, the neighbour is literally that - the one who shares the geographical space next door. Extended further afield, and building on work done by ethicists reflecting on the story of the Good Samaritan and the wider Christian tradition in which it is placed, the neighbour can be seen as the one whose needs you become aware of, whose fate is connected to yours. To recognise the neighbour is to recognise the fact that individuals have a common stake in their shared, multifaceted society, without demanding that they affiliate heart and soul with a particular facet of that society.

To recognise the neighbour is to recognise the fact that individuals have a common stake in their shared, multifaceted society, without demanding that they affiliate heart and soul with a particular facet of that society.

It is worth noting that in Jesus' parable, the Samaritan remains a Samaritan and the Hebrew traveller remains Hebrew. To emphasise neighbour is not to ignore the role that nation plays but, rather, to put it in its place. Nationhood contributes to the context in which individuals live and work, supplying a number of the essential ingredients of modern society. But it does not supply the content of that society, unable, as it is, to do justice to the complexity of people's identities, and serving merely to abstract and alienate them when it tries.

The structure of modern British society presents us with certain - critical - ideas, to which all must assent if we wish to live together, ideas such as the rule of law, the separation of powers, the supremacy of parliament, and the freedom, within certain judicial constraints, of speech. But such ideas provide the context not the content of modern British life. They are, to use a sporting analogy, the rules of the game, setting down the relevant authorities and procedures by which players must abide. Without them, the game descends into chaos. What these rules cannot do is dictate the style or results of the game. They cannot instruct us what to feel about particular players or how much or how little to celebrate certain outcomes. Rules are essential and basic for a game to function, but they do not insure quality of play. To treat such laws as a way of guaranteeing an interesting, friendly or well-played game is to misunderstand and misuse them.

The problem, however, as observed above, is that people have a tendency to misunderstand patriotism in precisely this way. More than one nation has contributed to the construction of this country, and many nations currently reside here. Used rightly, the idea of civic patriotism celebrates the rules of the country - the civic rights and freedoms enjoyed by all citizens. Often, however, patriotism is readily, if subtly, turned into the kind of flag-waving that alienates those who do not share one particular understanding of one particular national culture within the country.

Yet a celebration of civic structures - judicial restraint, separation of powers and the like - simply does not stir the blood. We want something more.

The challenge, therefore, for Mr Brown, and all other politicians who venture onto this territory, is to channel the energies of patriotism to the ends of neighbourliness. As this report has emphasised throughout, Mr Brown himself has often articulated precisely what those neighbourly ends should be. In a speech to the Volunteering Conference in January 2005, he said:

> The community where I grew up revolved not only around the home but the church, the youth club, the rugby team, the local tennis club, the scouts and boys' brigades, the

> Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the St John and St Andrew's ambulance societies… community not in any sense as some forced coming together, some sentimental togetherness for the sake of appearances, but out of a largely unquestioned conviction that we could learn from each other and call on each other in times of need, that we owed obligations to each other because our neighbours were part also of what we all were: the idea of neighbourliness woven into the way we led our lives…

Yet a celebration of civic structures - judicial restraint, separation of powers and the like - simply does not stir the blood. We want something more.

"My vision," he continued, with a sentiment that could almost have been a commentary on the parable of the Good Samaritan, "is of communities no longer inward-looking and exclusive, but looking outwards, recognising that when the strong help the weak we are all stronger".[44]

It is this "idea of neighbourliness", rather than the flag in every garden, that should be at the heart of our concept of citizenship. And it is this idea of neighbourliness that should form the basis any "national day". The need for such a day has been much discussed over recent months, the idea being that a single day that embodies and celebrates something quintessentially British would draw us all together, helping to unite us as one cohesive and harmonious society.

This report points towards the idea that rather than introducing a Britain or UK day, in the form of a Bank Holiday, on, say, 15 June (Magna Carta) or 8 May (VE Day) or 6 June (D-Day) or 11 November (Remembrance Day) or, indeed, any of the many other days proposed - the sheer number points to the difficulties associated with identifying and celebrating the concept of Britishness - any "national day" should be focused on the idea of the neighbour, rather than the nation.

What might a National Neighbourhood Day look like? There is, of course, already a National Volunteers' Week, which celebrates the incalculable impact that Britain's estimated 22 million volunteers have on national life. It does not, however, have official status. Whereas no government can enforce neighbourliness any more than it can compel volunteering, it could give official endorsement to a National Neighbourhood Day, perhaps as the climax of National Volunteers' Week, by providing funding for local groups to establish and run neighbourhood projects, and by encouraging employers to release employees for the day or to instigate their own projects, perhaps as part of their corporate social responsibilities.

A single day would attract considerable attention, but is unlikely to make a significant, long-term difference by itself. Thus, there is potential for a more firmly rooted programme, perhaps along the lines of the widespread Neighbourhood Watch organisation. The UK

currently boasts approximately 170,000 neighbourhood watch groups, covering around 6 million households, which have proved a successful and cost-effective way of deterring crime and of fostering neighbourly co-operation. It is supported by the UK Neighbourhood Watch Trust, which seeks, among other things, to "provide a range of downloadable resources on home security and community involvement" and "to bring together people with a common interest in creating community cohesion".[45]

Such objectives make it clear that rather than having simply a negative objective - to deter criminal activity - neighbourhood watch schemes also seek to develop and encourage community life. Given that such a vehicle already exists, the potential for expanding it, via an explicit emphasis on the neighbourly model for citizenship, is significant. Neighbourhood Watch could shift from meaning, as it does in the popular mind, "watching out" for criminal and anti-social behaviour, to meaning "watching out" for those in the community - the elderly, disabled, new arrivals, young families - who may need particular help. Watching people, thus, would become looking out for them.

Promoting a Neighbourhood Day or re-orienting and expanding Neighbourhood Watch presents an additional challenge to the Prime Minister and, indeed, any Westminster politician. Put simply, encouraging the neighbourly model for citizenship necessitates a genuine relinquishing of power. No politician can make people good neighbours. As Mr Brown himself emphasised in his speech to the Volunteering Conference, national leadership should not seek centre stage, but instead, it should create "space for the neighbourliness and voluntary energies of millions of people to light up our country".[46]

This is a riskier strategy than is often recognised. Politicians can provide funds, time, guidance and encouragement. But they cannot engineer a neighbourly society. That is up to the neighbours.

conclusion

The Prime Minister has stated that "more so than in any other century, the twenty-first century world will be characterised by people of different nationalities living closer to each other and having to find ways to live together".[47] He is absolutely right. There are many "nations" living within these united kingdoms of Britain, and the situation invariably brings with it a set of problems. The option that Gordon Brown and the rest of our society faces is whether the solution to those problems lies in an even greater focus on the nation or a renewed appreciation for the qualities of the neighbour. We have suggested that the new Prime Minister's emphasis on pride in an overarching national identity has the possibility of undermining his own vision of a country that excels in the practical application of civic, neighbourly virtues.

Human beings will always tell stories about their identities and the various communities in which they live, in order to define who they are and what they should do. The key question is not whether we tell stories - about ourselves, our communities, nations and states - but what kind and how formative these stories are.

Narratives of patriotism are better than narratives of nationalism, leading people, as they do, towards isolation and alienation. Yet because narratives of patriotism draw from the same mix of self-selecting history, pseudo-religious ideas and the desire to affiliate with an overarching destiny, they can flirt with exclusion and alienation. More pointedly, evidence suggests that the energies of the patriot do not necessarily effect a healthy culture of engaged and responsible citizenship. A narrative of patriotic identity might rally the troops, but it will not necessarily improve society. We need to go beyond patriotism.

This report has argued that the narrative of the neighbour, as embodied in the tale of the Good Samaritan and elaborated in subsequent Christian ethical thinking, offers a more appropriate and fruitful story for twenty-first century Britain. It is a story of a community of joiners, of local groups and empowered, responsible persons. It is the story of a society that accords access and ability for participation to all. It is a story that has room for more than one nation and which knows it is a product of many cultures. It is the story that Gordon Brown and other politicians engaged in the task of nurturing our civil society must tell.

chapter 4 - references

1 Luke 10.25-37

2 Sóren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton University Press, 1995, original published 1847) p. 45

3 Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 49

4 Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 52

5 Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 55

6 Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 56

7 Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 56

8 Maurizio Viroli, *For Love of Country* (Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 184. Emphasis mine. See, for example, when Conservative politician Oliver Letwin was asked on a radio programme, "So ... it's what the country's done for you that makes you patriotic?" He replied: "Yes, exactly." *Analysis* Radio 4, 7 November 2002

9 Andrew Vincent, *Nationalism and Particularity* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 128

10 Vincent, 2002, p. 128

11 See Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 53

12 Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 56

13 Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 51

14 Kierkegaard, 1995, pp. 51-52

15 Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 50

16 Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 53

17 See Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Allen and Lane, 2006), p. 114 also pp. 116, 157

18 Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 44

19 Kierkegaard, 1995, p. 46

20 Gordon Brown, "Britishness" in *Moving Britain Forward*, p. 15

21 Gordon Brown, *Fabian*

22 Brown, *Fabian*

23 Brown, *Fabian*

24 Brown, *Fabian*

25 Brown, "Britishness", p. 20

26 Gordon Brown, "Liberty, Responsibility and Fairness" in *Moving Britain Forward*, p. 36

27 Brown, *Fabian*

28 Brown, *Fabian*

29 Brown, *Fabian*

30 Brown, "Britishness", p. 20

31 Brown, *Fabian*

32 Brown, *Fabian*

33 Brown, *Fabian*

34 Brown, *Fabian*

35 Brown, *Fabian*

36 Brown, *Fabian*

37 Gordon Brown, "We Need a United Kingdom" Daily Telegraph, 13 January 2007

38 Brown, Daily Telegraph

39 Brown, *Fabian*

40 Brown, *Fabian*

41 Brown, *Fabian*

42 Brown, *Liberty*, p. 42

43 Brown, "Britishness", p. 19

44 Gordon Brown, Speech at Volunteering Conference, January 2005 (www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/newsroom_and_speeches/press/2005/press_11_05.cfm)

45 www.neighbourhoodwatch.net

46 Brown, *Volunteering*

47 Brown, *Telegraph*

Policy Statement

Theos
Licence Department
34 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 0RE
United Kingdom

hello@theosthinktank.co.uk

Red, White, Blue… and Brown

Citizens, Patriots and the Prime Minister

Patriotism is back on the political agenda. Not only can politicians talk openly about British values and the British way of life, but it is increasingly felt that they need to, partly to foster social cohesion and partly to build civil society.

But does it? Are we asking too much of patriotism if we load it with these tasks?

Red, White, Blue… and Brown analyses Gordon Brown's use of patriotic rhetoric, his idea of national identity and his vision for citizenship. It identifies two strands in his thinking - the 'national' and the 'neighbourly' - and argues strongly that it is the second of these on which the Prime Minister, and other politicians, need to focus.

Whereas commitment to the basic civic values of the state is essential and non-negotiable if we are to live together in peace, it is not the case that patriotism will necessarily build active and engaged citizens. Patriotism can offer us the rules of the game but it cannot dictate its quality.

Ultimately, we need to go beyond patriotism and adopt a 'neighbourly model' for citizenship if we wish to build a strong and healthy civil society. It is good neighbours, and not good patriots, who make the best citizens.

"Theos engages with public debate in a way that is not reactive or defensive but makes a really constructive contribution to the transformation we need."

Rt Revd Richard Chartres, Bishop of London

"Theos always gives an interesting alternative view on the complex and critical issues leaders face. It's the place to go for a new angle or different perspective."

Lord Hastings of Scarisbrick, CBE,
Chairman, Crime Concern

£10

IBSN: 978-0-9554453-2-3

Theos
The public theology think tank