

National identity and the “Kohn dichotomy”

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This article assesses the analytical value of the “Kohn dichotomy” – the notion that there are two types of nationalism, resting on civic values in the West and on ethnic values outside the West. It begins by outlining the intellectual history of this dichotomy since its origin in the 1860s and by analyzing its main features. It contrasts the state traditions of Central and Eastern Europe and Western Europe in three areas: the geopolitical evolution of the state, the state’s perspective on its own population as reflected in efforts to measure “ethnic nationality” through such instruments as the population census, and divergences in citizenship law. It shows that data from recent programs of comparative survey research, and analysis of nationalist ideology, highlight the variety of forms that nationalism may take in the two parts of Europe. The article concludes that the “ethnic–civic” dichotomy is valuable as an ideal type with the capacity to shed light on the nature of ethnic affiliation, not as a categorical classification system. Different ethnonational groups comprise mixtures of people who use a combination of “ethnic” and “civic” reference points; they do not coincide with global territorial zones that may be identified with any level of clarity.

Keywords: Hans Kohn; nationalism; Europe; civic nationalism; ethnic nationalism; language

Introduction

To what extent may stark, regionally rooted political models play a useful role in the analysis of nationalism? In summer 1972, a distinguished Oxford political philosopher, John Plamenatz, used the geographically neutral forum of Canberra’s Australian National University to deliver an influential lecture that distinguished two types of nationalism. The contrasting circumstances that shaped the emergence of nationalism in two global zones, he argued, had generated distinctive ideological forms that were generally (but not exclusively) liberal in Western Europe, and generally (but not exclusively) illiberal in the Slavic world, Asia, and Africa (Plamenatz 1973). Later commentary pushed this global contrast further, bypassing the more nuanced nature of Plamenatz’s original presentation. A particularly important expression, given its political implications, was the “clash of civilizations” thesis, which identified a critical tension between “the West and the rest,” placing “Western civilization” in a relationship of antagonism with “non-Western civilizations,” the distinction marked by the political, military, and economic dominance of the former, underlain by the religious traditions of western Christianity (Huntington 1993, 48–49).

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Although Plamenatz made no reference to the substantial literature on nationalism that was already beginning to appear in the second half of the twentieth century, there is an obvious convergence between his West–East distinction and the so-called Kohn dichotomy, which distinguished what were eventually labeled “civic” and “ethnic” forms of nationalism, associating the former with Western Europe and the latter with Eastern Europe (and, ultimately, the rest of the “non-western” world). This article explores this dichotomy further, suggesting that while attempts to equate it crudely with two geopolitical zones in Europe are misguided, the dichotomy itself is not without value in drawing attention to ideal types of collective identity that may in turn shed light on patterns of nationalism in particular states. The article begins by considering the roots of the civic–ethnic dichotomy, which are embedded much more deeply in European intellectual history than is commonly supposed, and by exploring further the implications of this dichotomy. It continues by looking at differences between the two parts of Europe in respect of ethnic identity, examining in turn the geopolitical development of the state, its approach to the measurement of ethnicity, and its policy on citizenship. It highlights the complex picture that emerges when survey data are used to assess identity patterns across the continent, and concludes by pointing to the utility of the Kohn dichotomy if its two components are seen as ideal types (which need not exist in reality) rather than as discrete categories (which are pointless unless they are populated).

Origins of the civic–ethnic dichotomy

In analyzing the growth of nationalism, Kohn (1944, 329–334; 1965, 29–37; 1968, 12–28) identified two broad patterns. He saw Western-style nationalism as a project of the state, aimed at disseminating a sense of nationality that was essentially political, and coextensive with the state. He interpreted nationalism elsewhere as a protest against existing state forms, expressed initially largely in cultural terms, and as “a venture in education and propaganda rather than in policy shaping and government” (Kohn 1944, 330). The distinction between these two types – one open and inclusive, the other closed and exclusive – later came to be referred to as “the Kohn dichotomy,” a label apparently coined by Snyder (1968, 53–57). Before analyzing the manner in which this concept has been applied, it is important to examine its roots in European intellectual history.

The source of Kohn’s dichotomous typology has been attributed to his own life experience in Central Europe in the early twentieth century, where, during his early years in Prague, he had a front-seat view of the contest between competing models of identity (Liebich 2006). Kohn’s youthful political activism and his early involvement with Zionism encouraged his work on Jewish intellectual history; his 1924 pamphlet on “the political idea of Judaism” was substantially incorporated in his much broader classic study of nationalism 20 years later (Pianko 2010, 297–300). Indeed, Kohn’s endorsement of the Western rather than the Eastern model of nationalism may well have been a reaction, prompted by the very different climate of the early 1940s, against his early empathy with romantic nationalism (Pianko 2010, 309–310). It was during the post-war period that the sharply normative distinction between the two types of nationalism acquired particular political significance, with the experience of Fascism and Nazism having discredited one type (Wolf 1976, 633). This perspective was consolidated by the onset of the Cold War, with Kohn opting strongly for the “Western” model as characteristic of the North Atlantic area, and going on to present NATO as the instrument for the preservation of “the liberal traditions of Western Europe” (Gordon 2011, 49).

The origins of this dichotomy, however, long predate Hans Kohn (Coakley 2012, 206–207; Larin 2010, 451–452). He was himself immersed in a literature in which distinctions of this kind were commonplace, and similarities have been identified with dichotomies in the work of Thomas Mann and of Ferdinand Tönnies (Liebich 2006, 581). The two ideal types of collectivity identified by Tönnies (1955 [1887]) – *Gemeinschaft*, a community given its coherence by traditional values and emotional bonds, and *Gesellschaft*, a society held together by impersonal norms and rational calculations – became increasingly familiar to social analysts in the early twentieth century. Though sharing obvious features with the Kohn dichotomy, the *Gemeinschaft–Gesellschaft* distinction did not form its basis; rather, Kohn cited the work of the celebrated German historian Friedrich Meinecke, who had distinguished between the concepts of *Staatsnation* and *Kulturnation*, essentially nations constructed by state-level political forces and those owing their existence to cultural (and especially linguistic) distinctiveness (Kohn 1922, 115). But this was a widely recognized distinction: Meinecke (1908, 2–3), in turn, attributed the dichotomy to Julius Neumann, a noted German economics professor. Neumann (1888, 132–149) acknowledged the distinction as one already made by several scholars, and it appears to have overlapped with broader discussion of the relationship between nation (or people, *Volk*) and state, one with deep roots in nineteenth-century German constitutional law, as articulated, for instance, by the very influential Swiss-born constitutional lawyer, Johann Kaspar Bluntschli (1852, 37–40). It thus does not appear that the Kohn dichotomy has any simple, linear pattern of ancestry.

The intellectual roots of the dichotomy are usually, following Kohn, traced back to eighteenth-century philosophers, and in particular to the contrasting perspectives of Rousseau and Herder (Barnard 1983; Qvortrup 2003, 74–94; Patten 2010). Rousseau, whose parentage of this perspective has been persuasively questioned (Larin 2012, 85–89), is, in this view, taken as representing the “civic” side, seeing the nation as a collection of free individuals consenting to be governed as a unit, an interpretation later to be developed by French thinkers. Herder, by contrast, is associated with an understanding of the nation not as a mere collection of individuals but as an organic entity with a spirit of its own, set apart from other nations by community and distinctiveness of culture and especially of language, an approach that attracted many intellectuals in Central and Eastern Europe. It is easy to see the compatibility between the former approach and the process of nation-building in Western Europe, where, to oversimplify, state tended to come before nation: the French nation and the English nation developed as a consequence of many generations of shared statehood. The latter approach was associated, by contrast, with the rise of nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe, where nation tended to come before state. Thus, the German nation was seen as the expression of a shared culture despite political fragmentation in what was to become Germany, while the Czech nation’s evolution was associated with the revival of a distinctive language and culture that were able to survive incorporation in the multinational Habsburg monarchy.

The integration of these two types in a single explanatory theory may be detected in early Marxist thought (Brown 1999, 284). Engels (reverting to earlier terminology of Hegel’s) articulated an analytical distinction between “historic” and “historyless” nations, referring respectively to those with and those without a dominant ruling class, with the latter destined to disappear by absorption in other more “progressive” nations (Kasprzak 2012). In a yet more outspoken expression than any that would later appear in the academic literature, he dismissed the “historyless” nations as “ethnic trash” (Coakley 2012, 149). This distinction was also echoed in the writings of John Stuart Mill, sharply different though his starting position was (Jaskułowski 2010, 297–298). For Mill, there

were modern civilized nations, such as the British and the French, which were destined to come to the rescue of such marginal peoples as the Bretons, Basques, Welsh, and Scottish Highlanders by absorbing them. The “inferior and more backward” member of each of these latter nationalities was, as Mill saw it, “the half-savage relic of past times, revolving in his own little mental orbit, without participation or interest in the general movement of the world” (Mill 1861, 29). Absorption in a “superior” nation would, from this perspective, be a moment of liberation.

Alongside these distinctions made by Engels and Mill, however, more developed accounts of the two types of nation were to appear. One of the earliest was produced by the Belgian economist and academic, Laveleye (1868), whose description of two forms of nationalism anticipates practically everything that was to appear in later formulations. As he put it, one type of nationalism follows the establishment of schools in which peasants and artisans acquire basic literacy skills:

Alongside them, some enthusiast or other may be fired with interest in the despised language they speak, research its origins, polish it, cultivate it and use it to write verses or publish a newspaper. The newspaper gets read, the verses soar on wings of song, the people take it to their heart, as it springs from deep within themselves and is no longer the hated language of their masters; it speaks to them of their sufferings, their past, of the glory of their ancestors, of the power they once enjoyed, of the future greatness which awaits them. They learn that they belong to a race which numbers 10, 20 or 30 million souls. United, they could be strong, free, rich, and much to be feared; why should they, too, not have their place in the sun and their independent land? The writer, the priest, emerging from the crowd, sustain and stir up these aspirations, and, lo and behold, a nationality rises up which must be either satisfied or wiped out – there is no middle way. (Laveleye 1868, 517)

Laveleye saw this type of phenomenon, however, as associated with backward, ill-governed, oppressed peoples; he identified an alternative and broader source of community identification elsewhere, especially in the West:

Above the ethnographic nationalities are political nationalities, *elective* ones, one might say, having their roots in love of freedom, in the worship of a glorious past, in harmony of interests, in similarity of customs, ideas and all that makes up intellectual life. . . . Elective nationalities are more worthy of respect, as they rely on the intellect, while the others have as their justification only affinities of blood and origin. (Laveleye 1868, 518)

This distinction between “ethnographic” and “political” forms of nationalism already represents, in developed form, the distinction that was later to acquire such prominence in the analysis of nationalism in Germany, and that spread from there to the wider world, where it was ultimately recycled as the “Kohn dichotomy,” though Émile de Laveleye has a much stronger claim to its parentage than Hans Kohn.

Analysis of the civic–ethnic dichotomy

A useful summary of the model as it had been developed by Kohn up to the 1960s (by which time the superior character of the western type was further exaggerated) saw it as identifying two contrasting paths of development. Western nationalism originated in areas with a strong middle class, was based on post-Enlightenment rationality and rested on the principle of individual liberty; it was indigenous to Western societies themselves, was forward looking, tended to limit state power and was aimed at world unity. Eastern nationalism emerged in areas with a weak middle class, was based on romanticism and on a reaction against the Enlightenment, and stressed the collective unit; it was “derived” from the West, emphasized “a supposedly heroic and often mythical past,” tended to glorify state power and was narrow and exclusivist (Wolf 1976, 666).

Table 1. Two conceptions of the nation.

Area	French conception	German conception
<i>Source</i>		
Intellectual tradition:	Enlightenment, French revolution	German romanticism
Characteristic formulation:	Renan, "What is a nation?" (1882)	Fichte, "Discourses to the German nation" (1807–1808)
<i>Features</i>		
Basis of solidarity:	Contract (elective)	Fundamental character (ethnic)
Definition of membership:	"Civic-territorial"	"Ethnic-genealogical"
Label:	State nation (<i>Staatsnation</i>)	Cultural nation (<i>Kulturnation</i>)
Social articulation:	Civil society (<i>Gesellschaft</i>)	Community (<i>Gemeinschaft</i>)
Origin of people:	Citizenship	Ancestry
Criterion of affiliation:	Subjective data	(Quasi-) objective criteria
<i>Normative implications</i>		
Orientation:	Structure open to future	Tradition rooted in the past
Philosophical principle:	Freedom	Determinism
Collective basis:	Individualistic	Holistic
Political affiliation:	"Daily plebiscite"	Blood and language
Legal counterpart:	<i>jus soli</i>	<i>jus sanguinis</i>

Source: adapted from the summary by Cabanel (1997, 10) of the summary of these types by Schnapper (2003 [1994], 223–239).

If the Kohn dichotomy is to play a useful analytical function, however, it needs to be rescued from the apocalyptic shape it eventually acquired. Table 1 presents a free interpretation of another summary that seeks to strip the dichotomy back to its key components, distinguishing between normative and analytical features (Cabanel 1997, 9–10; based on Schnapper [1994] 2003, 223–239). This outlines a simple dichotomy between the "French" and "German" conceptions of the nation, with their roots, respectively, in the French Enlightenment and Revolution, and in German romanticism. On one side is the more "open," inclusive, individualistic form, where affiliation is based on territory and free choice; on the other is the more "closed," exclusive, holistic form, based on ethnic affiliation and perceived ancestry.¹

Not surprisingly, the Kohn dichotomy has attracted a great deal of criticism. The first cluster of critiques focuses on its geographical content. It may refer to classifications of nationalism that distinguish "French" from "German" types; the emphasis may be on "Western Europe" versus "Eastern Europe;" or the distinction may be between "the West" in a global sense, in opposition to "the East," or, perhaps "the rest." Even if the context is defined as Europe, there may be difficulties; Germany, a particularly challenging case, has been placed by different observers in both the "Western" and "Eastern" categories (Spencer and Wollman 1998, 259). But is "Eastern" Europe actually the counterpart to "Western" Europe? For many observers, there is a vital distinction between the profoundly historically distinctive "Central Europe" and "Eastern Europe" proper, in respect of which the dichotomy is unhelpful (Auer 1997). Even if a boundary could be identified, it is not clear that it would separate two manifestly differentiated zones; it fails to take account of the diversity of the nationalist experience in the two parts of Europe (Symmons-Symonolewicz 1965, 224). In the "East," while some forms of nationalism (as in Estonia and Latvia) appeared to conform to type by relying on ethnic arguments, there were others (as in Poland and Hungary) which, with their capacity to draw on many of the political traditions

associated with statehood, had a more Western appearance. On the other hand, American nationalism, exemplar, for Kohn, of the Western type, also departs from the stereotype by making use of elements of shared symbolism and ritual (Jaskułowski 2010, 296–300). In addition to apparent differences between countries within zones, there are differences within countries themselves: societies are not homogeneous in falling into one category or the other, since different groups and individuals may have followed quite different routes toward identification with the nation, as discussed later in this article.

The second line of attack on the dichotomy concerns its normative implications – hardly a surprising one, since the “superiority” of the Western model has been a feature from the beginning. To start with, it is possible to expose Western “superiority” to uncomfortable scrutiny, and to identify respects in which this value judgment is problematic. It is easy to find eastern examples of tolerance of minority cultures, and these may be set against the aggressively assimilationist Jacobin model that is so often to be found in the West (a long-recognized point; see Rothfels 1956). Furthermore, the association between value systems (liberal versus illiberal) and geography overlooks the significance of other causal factors; the critical consideration may well be the standing of the elites who propagate nationalist ideology. If they are insecure and fearful, it has been argued, nationalism is likely to be “illiberal;” if they are secure and self-confident, it is likely to be “liberal” – regardless of geographical zone (Brown 1999, 298). Similarly, it is more likely to have been sociocultural structure than geopolitical position that constrained the path of nationalist mobilization in the three large empires (Habsburg, Romanov, and Ottoman) that dominated Central and Eastern Europe (Harris 2012, 341). Overall, the factors that drive nationalism appear to be historically contingent rather than geographically intrinsic.

Furthermore, the attribution of higher moral value to Western nationalism may be simply self-serving, flowing from a biased concern on the part of Western observers “to downplay certain features of nationalism and the nation state” in Western liberal democracies, while “maintaining a full critical stance towards other manifestations of nationalism” (Spencer and Wollman 1998, 256). Not surprisingly, then, the dichotomy has also been dismissed as “untenable” and as “a mixture of self-congratulation and wishful thinking;” those who see nationalism in their country as “civic” are in reality engaging in a kind of ethnocentric indulgence by describing their form as Western, rational, voluntary, and “good,” in contrast to those forms which are Eastern, emotive, inherited, and “bad” (Yack 1999, 105). As one set of authors concluded, the dichotomy is now profoundly normative: “the only acceptable conception is the civic one. The ethnic conception is the view held by the bad guys” (Seymour, Couture, and Nielsen 1996, 9).

Paths to statehood

The pattern of evolution of nationalism and state building in Europe’s two major geopolitical zones has obvious implications for the “Kohn dichotomy.” In Central and Eastern Europe, we may identify four obvious phases in this process (Coakley 1994).

- During the *first phase*, up to the late nineteenth century, Central and Eastern Europe was dominated by three empires, the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman Turkish, in addition to the presence there of the Prussian Kingdom of the German Empire. In contrast to the relative ease with which the dominant nationalities in West European states could control their peripheries, the “state” nationalities in Central and Eastern Europe were insecure: in no case did the national group which

was politically dominant and which supplied the core of the governing elite constitute a numerical majority of the population.

- The *second phase* was kicked off by the birth of new “national” states in the late nineteenth century, beginning in the Balkans as the Ottoman Empire began to break up (with the appearance of Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania). The collapse of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires resulted in a complete reconfiguration of Central Europe in 1918 (with Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania detaching themselves from Russia, new states appearing as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Austria, and Hungary, and significant reconfiguration of Romania and what would become Yugoslavia). Although all of the new states regarded themselves as “national” ones, none was entirely mono-ethnic.
- In the *third phase* (the post-1945 period), the same “national” states became more homogeneous, a consequence of the extermination of Jewish populations in the Holocaust, of further frontier adjustments, and of large-scale, forced population movements involving millions of people, mainly Germans.
- In the *fourth phase*, the largest territorial restructuring since World War I took place, with the collapse of three multinational states (the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia) and their replacement by 24 smaller sovereign states. Furthermore, the collapse of authoritarian Communist regimes lifted the lid on a range of ethnic tensions that had earlier been repressed or accommodated, resulting in new challenges to the state in respect of the “national question.”

There was nothing resembling this four-stage historical framework in Western Europe, where slow evolution has been the underlying principle. The geopolitical map of Western Europe has changed little since the 1870s; it was altered only at the fringes. Norway became formally independent of Sweden in 1905; Iceland became formally independent of Denmark in 1944; and the Republic of Ireland appeared in 1949 (having been an independent member of the British Commonwealth since 1922). For more far-reaching changes in the state system, one has to go back to 1870, with the unification of Germany and the completion of the process of Italian unification. The Basque country, with its simmering violence in the later twentieth century, and Belgium, predictions of whose imminent break-up recur with alarming but unconvincing frequency, are examples of possible areas of future change, and Scotland and Catalonia later joined this list. But the stability and relative peace that have so far prevailed are more striking than the prospect of fundamental territorial restructuring in the near future in Western Europe. Indeed, even if existing states were to break up, this would paradoxically be in the context of a wider process of integration in the European Union, leaving aside the exceptional case of the UK’s relationship with the Union since June 2016.

Measuring national identity

The second contrast between the two parts of Europe has to do with efforts to measure national affiliation. It is very easy to produce lists of linguistic or “national” minorities in the states of Central and Eastern Europe, and to report their size – even if analysts and activists disagree as to their accuracy and as to the appropriateness of undertaking such measurement (see, for example, Shoup 1981, and the census publications and statistical yearbooks of the various states). One long-standing objection is that shoe-horning people into ethnic boxes distorts and oversimplifies people’s real sense of affiliation, creating new lines of division and eliminating overlapping patterns of loyalty (Teleki and Rónai

1937). This is echoed at the social scientific level by Brubaker's (1996, 13–22) warning about the danger of slipping into an understanding of ethnicity as a concrete, durable phenomenon rather than an amorphous, fluid one. But the public policy case for collecting data on ethnic affiliation is strong, and is just one of many such circumstances in which arbitrary classification lines are drawn by the modern state. In any case, this approach is more generous than the typical Jacobin practice of limiting recognition to just one "nation," a weightier consideration than any charge of "groupism" that may be leveled against this perspective.²

In respect of Western Europe, many handbooks and surveys have produced lists of regional and national minorities, described them in some detail, and provided estimates of their size. But the lists, the descriptions, and the assessments of size tend to vary, as will be seen from an examination of such works as Auerhan (1926) and Junghahn (1932) for the interwar period, Straka (1970), Stephens (1976), and Blaschke (1980) as delayed examples for the post-war period, and Pan and Pfeil (2003) for the contemporary period. For the most part, these works were based on unofficial data and estimates as far as Western Europe is concerned, and provided inconsistent information. The dilemma in the late twentieth century was summarized by one report that sought to explore the size of linguistic minorities. This criticized "the almost complete nonexistence" of official regulation in the area, the absence of coordinated information, and contradictory data (for example, it noted wide fluctuations in estimates of the numbers of speakers of Breton and Occitan, and reported two estimates for the number of Sardinian speakers, 158,000 and 1,200,000). It concluded that "there is *no* study, among the general studies available today on linguistic minorities in the European Community, which does not contain errors, wrong assessments, inaccuracies, omissions, etc." (European Communities 1986, 1).

Two factors help in accounting for this pattern of confusion and uncertainty in Western Europe. The first problem is the absence of conceptual clarity about the kinds of minority with which we are dealing. We encounter such adjectives as "ethnic," "national," "ethno-national," "regional," and "linguistic" in conjunction with the nouns "minority" or "group." But each of these words has different connotations in Western Europe (where "ethnic" may have implications of racial difference; "national" may be associated with a distinct linguistic heritage, though not necessarily with a vibrant linguistic community; and "regional" may have either geographical, historical, or linguistic connotations, or a mixture of these). The term *Volksgruppe* in German captures the concept of ethnic or national group less ambiguously – it refers to a "people" understood as a sociocultural community linked by shared historical consciousness and usually by language. Adhesion to this group is essentially a social matter, by contrast to membership of the state, which is a legal or political matter. The German language thus permits a relatively clear-cut distinction to be made between two concepts, *Volkszugehörigkeit* ("ethnic nationality," a subjectively defined sense of belonging to a particular national community) and *Staatsangehörigkeit* ("political nationality," or citizenship – though the identity of these two latter concepts should not be taken for granted).³ A parallel distinction may usually be made in the languages of Central and Eastern Europe, as reflected in official as well as colloquial usage; the distinction in Russian between *narodnost'* (or *national'nost'*) (ethnic nationality) and *grazhdanstvo* (citizenship) is an example. In Western Europe, by contrast, making this distinction presents an extraordinary challenge. There, the word "nationality" is generally used in English to convey the same meaning as "citizenship," and thus refers both to the political–legal and ethnic domains. A similar difficulty is associated with its equivalents in French and other West European languages.

The second difficulty that we encounter in Western Europe – a related one – is the question of measurement. In Central and Eastern Europe, numerous unofficial attempts were made in the nineteenth century to arrive at estimates of the ethnic composition of the state, and these were later supplemented by official enquiries. From 1880 onwards, a question on language was included in the decennial census in the Habsburg monarchy, and the publication of decennial data on language in Finland began in the same year. A question on language was included in the only pre-1917 all-Russian census in 1897 (an earlier census in the Baltic provinces in 1880 had included a question on language, as had partial censuses in the Baltic cities in 1867–1871). The tradition of a census enquiry about language usage extended also to certain adjacent states with mixed populations (Germany and Switzerland), and was continued in the successor states after 1918. In the Ottoman Empire, where the *millet* system gave prominence to religion rather than language as a source of social and political division, there were no corresponding developments at this stage, though the group rather than the individual long continued to be the dominant element in social relations.

In general at this time, language was treated as a surrogate for ethnic nationality: it was assumed that there was a near-perfect correspondence between the two. The substantial validity of this assumption became obvious after 1918, when questions on ethnic nationality (in addition to citizenship) became common in the censuses of Central and East European states. In Latvia in 1930, for instance, almost all identifying as ethnically Latvian spoke the Latvian language (97.6%), and almost all speakers of Latvian identified themselves as being ethnically Latvian (97.8%). For other groups within Latvia, the proportions were also high, although they tended to fall as the relative and absolute sizes of the minorities decreased (for instance, for Russians, the respective figures were 96.5% and 77.4%, and for Germans 88.6% and 76.5%; computed from Latvia 1930). Similar outcomes are to be found in other countries. The results of the last Soviet census in 1989 show that little had changed by then. In the Baltic area, for instance, 95.5% of ethnic Estonians regarded Estonian as their mother tongue; the corresponding figures for Latvians was 94.8% and for Lithuanians, 97.7%. The position in the other union republics was similar, with two exceptions: among ethnic Ukrainians, only 81.1% described the titular language as their mother tongue, and the corresponding proportion among ethnic Belorussians was just 70.9% (computed from USSR 1996, vol. 7).

In post-war Western Europe, only Belgium joined Switzerland in its statewide investigation of language. Already here, though, the question becomes more difficult to interpret as a measure of the size of linguistic communities; in earlier Belgian censuses, information on *knowledge* rather than *usage* of languages alone is available. In any case, for political reasons, the last census for which language data were reported was that of 1947. In Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the original census questions also enquired about *knowledge* of the local language, a question that is of limited value in making inferences about affiliation to a particular linguistic community. Elsewhere in Western Europe, censuses have traditionally avoided questions on language, with some exceptions at regional level, as in Spain (Extra and Gorter 2008, 28–30).

If the character of the West European state tradition has, then, impeded attempts to measure the size of linguistic communities, it has been even less favorable to efforts to assess ethnonational affiliation. As indicated above, Western languages appear not to allow the kinds of distinction between citizenship and ethnic nationality that are common in the languages of Central and Eastern Europe, in this perhaps reflecting certain social realities, but no doubt also helping to shape them. Even where, by the early twenty-first century, a couple of West European states had begun to enquire in

their censuses into “ethnic” background, this was typically narrowly defined, referring primarily to populations of immigrant origin. On matters of language, too, some state central statistics offices and regional agencies began to show greater interest, and to seek to capture data that are quite complex and subtle, often seeking to measure degree of knowledge and frequency of usage of minority languages – an approach both more ambitious and less stark than the categorical choices normally faced by census respondents in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

There is, then, a noteworthy difference in approach to the official collection of data on language and ethnic identity between the two parts of the continent – an apparent precision in language and nationality statistics in the East, which permits the fairly accurate logging of patterns of change, and the absence of any such precision in the West, which makes change difficult to measure. It is tempting to see this as being related to the long West European tradition of the individual-centered state, which has been markedly reluctant to recognize the existence of sub-state groups. This has not only impeded or undermined the identity of territorial minorities, assisting in their assimilation; policies of official non-recognition have also made it extremely difficult for researchers to recognize sub-state groups, to measure their size and to determine their frontiers. In addition, by contrast to Central and Eastern Europe, where ethnic identity and language are, as we have seen, strongly intercorrelated, in Western Europe, this relationship is much weaker. There we find such cases as Ireland, where only about 1% of the population uses the “national” language, Wales, Brittany, and the Basque country, where the proportion is higher but still modest, and Catalonia, where Catalan speakers are close to a majority of the population.

The continuing sharpness of this contrast is emphasized in Table 2. This looks at the investigation of matters relating to national identity in recent censuses in Europe (the main omissions from the table are countries that relied on population registration or other statistical collection methodologies). Of 23 countries of Central and Eastern Europe, these matters were investigated in some depth in 21 (Greece and Turkey are the exceptions; they confined their enquiries to citizenship). There was also a question on citizenship in almost all other cases (Serbia and Slovenia being the exceptions); this sometimes extended to further questions on the process of citizenship acquisition, place of birth, and even place of birth of parents. All 21 also asked a question on language, but with some variation in approach. In 17 of the 21 cases (all except Cyprus, Latvia, Poland and Russia), mother tongue was the object of enquiry. In Latvia and Poland, the question was on language of domestic use, or family language, an area covered by an additional question also in Belarus, Hungary, and Slovenia (in Moldova, an additional question addressed language usually used). In Russia, the principal question dealt with “native language,” but there, as in seven other cases, knowledge of languages was also explored. In Cyprus, the question addressed language spoken fluently. In all 21 cases, there was a question on ethnic nationality, however described, though in one of these (Cyprus), this was defined as “ethnic/religious group.” Indeed, a question on religious affiliation, often of importance for identity formation, was asked in 16 of the 21 cases.

A strong contrast emerges with the 12 states of Western Europe that are included in this overview. Most of these states enquired about citizenship (though four, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, and Spain, described this as “nationality”). Only six asked a question in the linguistic domain. The Swiss census was most comprehensive, with questions about main language, domestic language, and workplace language, and this approach was followed also in Luxembourg (where “main” language was defined as the language in which the respondent thought, and knew best). In Austria, the question asked simply about colloquial language. But in the UK, the position matched the complexity of that

Table 2. Census questions on identity matters, Europe, 2009–2014.

Country	Year	Citizenship	Language	Religion	Ethnic nationality
<i>Central and eastern Europe</i>					
Albania	2011	6	38 mother tongue	40	39 ethno-cultural group
Belarus	2009	8	10 mother tongue 11 domestic language 12 languages used freely	–	9 nationality
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2013	19	26 mother tongue	25	24 ethnic/national affiliation
Bulgaria	2011	9	11 mother tongue	13	10 ethnic group
Croatia	2011	18	20 mother tongue	21	19 ethnicity
Cyprus	2011	9	11 language spoken fluently	8	10 ethnic/religious group
Czech Republic	2011	4	10 mother language	12	11 ethnicity
Estonia	2012	15	19 mother tongue 20 other languages spoken	21	17 ethnicity
Greece	2001	9	–	–	–
Hungary	2011	3	21 languages spoken 36 mother tongue	38	34 nationality 35 second nationality
Latvia	2011	co7,co8	37 domestic language g02 domestic language	–	g01 ethnicity
Lithuania	2011	6	14 mother tongue 15 other languages known	16	13 ethnicity
Macedonia	2002	13	23 mother tongue	24	22 ethnic affiliation
Moldova	2014	22	24 mother tongue 25 language usually used 26 other languages known	27	23 ethnicity

(Continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Country	Year	Citizenship	Language	Religion	Ethnic nationality
Montenegro	2011	12	15 mother tongue 16 foreign languages used	14	13 ethnic affiliation
Poland	2011	13	15 domestic language	–	14 nationality (national or ethnic affiliation)
Romania	2011	22	24 mother tongue	25	23 ethnic affiliation
Russia	2010	6	9.1 knowledge of Russian 9.2 other languages 9.3 native language	–	7 national identity (ethnic affiliation)
Serbia	2011	–	22 mother tongue	23	21 national affiliation
Slovakia	2001	9	11 mother language	12	10 nationality
Slovenia	2002	–	31 mother tongue 32 domestic language	30	29 nationality, ethnicity
Turkey	2011	7	–	–	–
Ukraine	2001	8	7 mother tongue 7 knowledge of Ukrainian 7 other languages	–	6 ethnic origin
<i>Western Europe</i>					
Austria	2001	5	6 colloquial language	8	–
Belgium	2001	–	–	–	–
France	2008	3	–	–	–
Germany	2011	6	–	7,8	–
Ireland	2011	10	14 knowledge of Irish	11	ethnic/cultural background
Italy	2011-12	3	–	–	–
Luxembourg	2011	17	18 language in which one thinks 18 habitual language (home, work)	–	–

(Continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Country	Year	Citizenship	Language	Religion	Ethnic nationality
Malta	2011	8-11	26 knowledge of languages	–	–
Portugal	2001	7	–	–	–
Spain	2011	0	–	–	–
Switzerland	2010	7	1 main language (in which thinks, best) 2 domestic language 3 workplace language	4	–
UK					
England	2011	–	18 main language 19 fluency in English	20	15 national identity 16 ethnic group
Northern Ireland		–	19 main language 20 fluency in English	17,18	15 national identity 16 ethnic group
Scotland		–	21 knowledge of Irish, Ulster Scots 16 knowledge of English, Scots Gaelic, Scots 17 fluency in English	13	14 national identity 15 ethnic group
Wales		–	18 domestic language 18 main language 19 fluency in English 17 knowledge of Welsh	20	15 national identity 16 ethnic group

Note: Numbers refer to the numbering of the question on the census form. Census forms were not available for the omitted countries. Terms are English-language translations supplied by the national statistical offices in question, except for Belgium and Spain (provided by UN Statistics Division) and France and Germany (provided by the author). English-language versions of the most recent census forms in Greece and Portugal (2011) were unavailable, so the forms for 2001 were used. The most recent census forms for Austria, Belgium, Slovakia, and Ukraine were those of 2001, and for Macedonia and Slovenia 2002. A question on passports was asked in England (22) and Northern Ireland (14). Additional questions about domestic regional languages or dialects were asked in Estonia and Latvia. The question on citizenship was cited as asking about “nationality” in France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Spain, and Turkey. In Germany, the religion questions addressed (1) affiliation with a legally recognized church and (2) adherence to other religions, belief systems, or worldviews. In Northern Ireland, there was a second question about the religion in which people were brought up.

Source: derived from United Nations (2017), and, for the non-English countries of the UK, information from the relevant statistical offices.

state's territorial structure. Knowledge of languages was probed in all four countries of the UK, with a particular focus in each on indigenous languages (Irish, Ulster Scots, Scots, Scots Gaelic, and Welsh). A further question enquired about "main language" (except in Scotland), and fluency in English was also investigated. A question on knowledge of languages was included also in the Irish and Maltese censuses. Religious affiliation was investigated only in Austria, Germany, Ireland, and the UK. The two last-named countries stand out in having a question on ethnic identity. In the UK, a further question asked "how would you describe your national identity," offering such options as English, British, Scottish, and so on.

Citizenship law

It has been argued above that there are significant differences between the two main zones of Europe in respect of geopolitical tradition and the path toward statehood, and as regards the manner in which the state classifies the population along ethnonational lines. It is appropriate to conclude with a third issue: if the state tradition sets two zones of Europe apart as thoroughly as has been suggested above, one might expect this to be reflected in particular in citizenship policy.

Here, the evidence is not entirely conclusive. One major comparative study of Turkey and the 10 new member states of the EU's Eastern enlargement concluded that concepts of nationality and citizenship there "differ quite strongly from those prevalent in Western Europe" in stressing the ethnic principle, the centrality of descent, and exclusivity of citizenship (Bauböck, Perching, and Sievers 2007, 12). As another comparative overview put it, there is a "clear and dramatic difference" in citizenship law between West European states and the new, post-Communist EU member states, with provisions for acquisition of citizenship by birth significantly more restrictive in the latter (Liebich 2010, 2).

This has been criticized, however, for presenting too stark a contrast, since it is possible to find examples of restrictive citizenship policies in the "old" member states, and of more open policies in the "new" ones (Kovács 2010; Makaryan 2010; Iordachi 2010; Dumbrava 2010). While accepting criticisms of the civic-ethnic dichotomy in relation to citizenship, similarly, Koning (2011, 1974) hails it as "a useful heuristic device" and as "a valuable analytical tool" for purposes of comparison and classification. Further systematic examination of citizenship policy across European states suggests that while there is great variation within each zone, East European countries tend to follow more restrictive policies (Ariely 2013, 124). Given its relatively concrete nature, it is possible to construct a citizenship policy index (CPI), a scale ranging from 0 to 6 based on an equal weighting of three measures: availability of citizenship on the basis of *jus soli* or birth, duration of residence requirements, and possibility of dual citizenship for naturalized immigrants (Howard 2009, 20–26). Applying this to the 15 longest-standing EU member states and the 12 new entrants by 2009 shows a big difference between the two blocs, with the median value of the CPI at 4.22 in the former and only 0.68 in the latter (computed from Howard 2009, 28, 173). However, there was great variation within each bloc, with some of the highest-scoring in the East European bloc (such as Bulgaria and Slovakia, CPI = 1.93) scoring higher than the lowest-scoring in the West European bloc (such as Austria and Denmark, CPI = 0.00).

There appear, then, to be important East-West differences in citizenship policy in Europe, even if these are accompanied by big intra-zone differences. The verdict also depends on the period chosen as a basis for comparison (in the West European states discussed above, for instance, the median CPI was only 1.72 in the 1980s; computed from Howard 2009, 27). The answer may also boil down to questions of perspective –

whether the glass is half-empty or half-full. The objective facts of citizenship law do not change, but the prism through which they are examined may encourage a focus either on similarities across regions or on differences within them.

Survey evidence

Since the 1970s, a mushrooming of comparative survey data has provided a wealth of evidence for the investigation of ethnicity-related questions. Among large-scale cross-national datasets, the most important are the Eurobarometer series (at least twice yearly since 1973), the International Social Survey Programme (annually since 1985), the European Value Study and the related World Values Survey (about every nine years since 1981), and the European Social Survey (every two years since 2002). Studies based on datasets such as these offer qualified evidence of an East–West division in Europe. Janmaat (2006), for example, noted that East European respondents were more likely to use cultural and ethnic reference points. Ariely (2013, 137), complementing this, came to the conclusion that the civic component of national identity is rather stronger in the West.

Most research based on survey analysis, however, yields more skeptical findings about the significance of any East–West division in Europe. Hjerm (2003), for instance, uncovered very little difference between the two parts of Europe in culturally based national pride, leading to the conclusion that the Kohn dichotomy “needs to be reconsidered.” Ceobanu and Escandell (2008) identified regional differences in the balance between ethnic and civic determinants of attitudes toward immigrants, but concluded that the dichotomy itself was of limited value in explaining East–West differences. Jones and Smith (2001) and Shulman (2002) found little empirical support for the view that Kohn’s two stereotypes could be geographically segregated. Reeskens and Hooghe (2010) suggested that while there appear to be separate “ethnic” and “civic” perspectives on ethnic nationality, these are not sufficiently robust to permit a ranking of countries according to the extent to which one or other principle is predominant.

These findings are reinforced by more specifically targeted studies. Within the “eastern” zone, civic markers commonly appear alongside ethnic ones in surveys, as in Poland, Latvia, and Lithuania (Björklund 2006). A comparative study of the attitudes of 12 ethnic minorities in Central and Eastern Europe showed the overwhelming dominance of hybrid identities rather than purely civic and ethnic ones (Cebotari 2016, 655–656). A study of Russian nationalist ideology identified both “civic” and “ethnic” tendencies, though in different levels of strength at different points in time (Rabow-Edling 2008). Competition between the two types was also detected in constitutional debates in Poland following the fall of Communism (Zubrycki 2001) and in political debate in the early years of interwar Latvia (Germane 2012).

Within the “Western” zone, reciprocally, “ethnic” elements may often be seen, as in Canada, where English Canadians initially saw themselves as the core members of the nation (Nieguth 1999, 167–168), or the USA, where Afro-Americans and native Americans were *not* seen as part of the nation (Jaskułowski 2010, 296–297). At the core of French “civic” identity lay the French language and culture, whose nation-building role followed the same “ethnic” path as that of many revolutionary nationalist movements that appealed to ancestral values. The “Britishness” of British identity, similarly, often seen as “civic” in incorporating the Scots and Welsh, coexists with a profound and sometimes explicit articulation of “Englishness,” a narrower concept with more “ethnic” connotations.

If presented as categorical alternatives for the classification of nations or nationalism, the two halves of the “Kohn dichotomy” are potentially misleading (Clark 2010). Analysis

of the historical experience of Europe, and in particular of the opening up of Central and East European societies after the fall of Communism, highlights the limitations of the dichotomy as a description of twin paths of evolution in that continent (Kuzio 2002). It is thus hard to resist the conclusion of Smith (1991, 13) to the effect that elements of both types will be found in many, if not all, nationalist movements. Indeed, one of Smith's major contributions to the study of nationalism has been to show how dominant groups which are seen as purveyors of a form of civic nationalism may themselves be expressions of a form of ethnic nationalism (Kaufmann and Zimmer 2004).

Conclusion

We return now to the main question being addressed in this article to what extent might the "Kohn dichotomy" help to illuminate contrasting structures of nationalist ideology and culture in the two parts of the European continent? The discussion above suggests that while there are areas where there indeed appears to be a sharp contrast, such as geopolitical heritage, state-sponsored approaches to the measurement of national identity, and citizenship law, these are reflected imperfectly, if at all, in official ideology and in public opinion. There seems to be cautious scholarly agreement that while the civic–ethnic dichotomy may offer a useful mechanism for the exploration of nationalist values, there is no evidence that it sets one part of Europe (or, indeed, of the wider world) apart from another.

Endowing the Kohn dichotomy with real value seems to require two changes. First, it needs to be stripped of its normative content. Although some scholars have sought to apply it in a value-neutral way, it has been associated with the image of "good" and "bad" forms of nationalism since the 1860s, and these were further exaggerated by Hans Kohn in his later years. The negative image of ethnic nationalism may indeed serve state interests by disguising certain of the techniques of nation-building, such as the pretense of ethnic neutrality in circumstances where the culture of the dominant group is granted *de facto* privileged status (Roshwald 2016). But the East European tradition of collecting statistics on the ethnic composition of the state should not necessarily be seen in a negative light, given their potential public policy importance. Indeed, the absence of such initiatives in the West could be seen not as a benign western indifference to ethnic diversity but precisely as an expression of a covert form of ethnic nationalism: as part of a project by which English culture might penetrate Scotland and Wales, and French culture might penetrate Brittany and Alsace, all the more effectively because of the refusal to acknowledge that there were significant cultural differences in the first place. Kohn himself was by no means blind to the irony that Western societies had themselves gone through an intense phase of quasi-ethnic nationalism, observing that "there is little to be found in Asian or African nationalism today which has not a close parallel in, or has not been surpassed by, European attitudes in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century" (Kohn 1968, 24).

The second change needed if the civic–ethnic dichotomy is to play a useful role is to see the dichotomy as representing ideal types – ones which may coexist, in varying degrees, within the same nationalist movement. The dichotomy then becomes a potentially valuable framework for the analysis of nationalism (Smith 1991, 81–83). Autobiographical writing by nationalist leaders illustrates the extent to which, in many cases, they themselves veered between ethnic and civic conceptions of their nations; no doubt, this was also true of many ordinary people whose lives are not documented in any detail. But even if this were not the case, and individuals could be assigned to one of these categories or the other, it is likely that the population at large would be made up of a mixture of the two types, though with one perhaps predominating. The "civic–ethnic" dichotomy should not be entirely cast aside in

helping to explain differences between Eastern and Western parts of Europe; indeed, careful analysis of nationalism in France and Germany shows elements of the dichotomy in that paired comparison (Brubaker 1992, 10–11). Different clusters of state traditions, driven by contrasting historical experiences, are probably primarily responsible for the “East–West” difference; the Kohn dichotomy needs to be redefined as a useful heuristic instrument in a complex analytical area, an ideal type that does not in itself contain the seeds of explanation, but which constitutes a potentially valuable yardstick for measurement.

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Notes

1. The terminology used to describe the two types has varied, with the “civic–ethnic” one perhaps the most common; others include the distinction between “demotic” and “ethnic” nationalism made by Francis (1976).
2. “Groupism” has been defined by Brubaker (2002, 164) as “the tendency to take discrete, sharply differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis,” a tendency that would undermine scientific analysis of ethno-social phenomena, but one that can all too easily be attributed to those using ethnonyms as labels of convenience.
3. Bös (2000) argues that “nationality” refers to the legal concept of formal affiliation to the state, while “citizenship” is a broader political concept; but this need not lead to any confusion with the concept of ethnic nationality discussed here.

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