

Why do people feel loyalty to their nation, as well as to their family, region, class and religion? When is a healthy sense of national identity transformed into a virulent nationalism? What are the ethnic roots of so many contemporary conflicts? Can nations be created 'by design' when colonial or multi-ethnic empires collapse? And what, exactly, *is* a nation?

Such crucial and contentious questions are analysed in this stimulating new book. Anthony D. Smith asks why the first modern nation states developed in the West. He considers how ethnic origins, religion, language and shared symbols can provide a sense of nation – even to Basques, Armenians, Kurds and Tamils without a state of their own. He illuminates his argument with a wealth of detailed examples: the divisions in the Soviet Union, ethnic separatism within Europe, pan-Arab and pan-African movements, the successes and failures of nation-building on every continent. Throughout he stresses the positive as well as the pernicious aspects of strong national allegiances. A provocative final chapter considers the prospects of a 'post-national' world.

The cover shows *Jeanne d'Arc* by Ingres in the Louvre, Paris (photo: Giraudon)



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