

Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security

Catarina Kinnvall

Department of Political Science, Lund University

The globalization of economics, politics, and human affairs has made individuals and groups more ontologically insecure and existentially uncertain. One main response to such insecurity is to seek reaffirmation of one's self identity by drawing closer to any collective that is perceived as being able to reduce insecurity and existential anxiety. The combination of religion and nationalism is a particularly powerful response ("identity-signifier") in times of rapid change and uncertain futures, and is therefore more likely than other identity constructions to arise during crises of ontological insecurity.

KEY WORDS: globalization, religion, nationalism, conflict, insecurity, identity formation, identity mobilization

The aftermath of 9/11 continues to play a defining role in world politics. The bombs over Afghanistan have been replaced by fragile attempts to keep the country together as funds are drying up and the Afghan regions are again becoming increasingly divided. The people of Iraq continue to live in fear and uncertainty of their livelihood as international forces struggle to set up an interim regime contested by many. Australians, who had felt largely untouched by world conflict, have seen themselves being forced onto the stage of world politics as a result of the terrorist assault in Bali. Palestinians continue to lose the battle of the occupied territories, and the headquarters of the Palestinian authorities are under constant siege in response to yet another deadly raid on Israeli civilians. Heightened tension at international airports is affecting all travelers, but some more than others as non-Westerners come under constant scrutiny. Those risking their lives to escape the economic and political hardship of their countries in search of a better life for themselves and their children are increasingly denied access to Western societies. And national governments are responding to their citizens' concern for tightened security and the closing of borders to immigrants and

refugees. As a consequence, anti-immigration language has become the norm among politicians who wish to mobilize opinion in favor of their own policies.

In other words, the globalization of economics and politics is being felt among ordinary citizens as time and space are being compressed and as events elsewhere, real or imagined, are becoming increasingly localized. A globalized world is for many a world devoid of certainty, of knowing what tomorrow holds. It is a world where many people feel intensified levels of insecurity as the life they once led is being contested and changed at the same time. Globalization challenges simple definitions of who we are and where we come from. A number of factors related to globalization seem to increase the gaps between those who have reaped the benefits of the global market and those who have been left behind. Democratizing forces are threatening traditional structures in many societies, leaving some feeling uneasy about the value of these forces. Fear of losing work, status, or other privileges is constantly felt and has engendered the growth of new local identities in response to the effects of the global market.

The destabilizing effects of globalization obviously predate 9/11, but we will find it difficult to understand this event and others like it unless we grasp the structural conditions of insecurity related to globalization. As individuals feel vulnerable and experience existential anxiety, it is not uncommon for them to wish to reaffirm a threatened self-identity. Any collective identity that can provide such security is a potential pole of attraction. It is a war of emotions, where world leaders and other paramount figures are seeking to rally people around simple rather than complex causes. As rallying points, some of these causes seem to have more powerful appeal than others. Nationalism and religion are two such causes or “identity-signifiers” that are more likely than other identity constructions to provide answers to those in need. As argued here, nationalism and religion supply particularly powerful stories and beliefs because of their ability to convey a picture of security, stability, and simple answers. They do this by being portrayed as resting on solid ground, as being *true*, thus creating a sense that the world really is what it appears to be.

Globalization and Its Effects: The Global-Local Nexus and Issues of Insecurity

How is globalization a destabilizing force? Globalization is not a new phenomenon, but it has involved some real changes in terms of *scale*, *speed*, and *cognition* (Kinnvall, 2002a). In terms of scale, the number of economic, political, and social linkages between societies is greater than at any previous time in history. In terms of speed, globalization involves a compression of time and space never previously experienced; in terms of cognition, there is an increased perception of the globe as a smaller place—that events elsewhere have consequences for our everyday political, social, and economic lives, affecting individuals’ sense of being. It is this de-territorialization of time and space that affects daily life; in a

world of diminishing territorial barriers, the search for constant time- and space-bound identities has become a way to cope with the effects of modern life (Harvey, 1989, p. 4).¹

What this means is that globalization in terms of increased movement of goods, services, technology, borders, ideas, and people has real social and economic consequences (Manners, 2000). Some of the less desirable consequences are manifest in increasing rootlessness and loss of stability as people experience the effects of capitalist development, media overflow, structural adjustment policies, privatization, urbanization, unemployment, forced migration, and other similar transformative forces. Here it is important to note how the process of globalization is often accompanied by a “neoliberal” ideology all over the world. The policy changes described as liberalization accelerated at the end of the 1970s, with a move from Keynesian economics toward more monetarist macroeconomic policies in most developed countries followed by the introduction of structural adjustment programs in the 1980s and 1990s in developing societies (Hurrell & Woods, 1999). These programs, aimed at privatization and increased global competitiveness, were meant to create stability and to strengthen civil society. But they have often had the reverse effect by removing job security from the middle and lower-middle classes in many societies, thus aggravating social tension (Calhoun, 1994; Hoogvelt, 2001; Hurrell & Woods, 1999; Kolodner, 1995). Because of the state’s decreasing involvement in the economic sector, the image of the government as a welfare provider has also been undermined in many societies, creating an authority vacuum in which new groups and leaders have emerged as a response to individuals’ desire for security and welfare. Such groups and leaders often provide a challenge to the state, as witnessed by everything from nationalist claims to anti-globalization campaigns.

The spread of democratic values has further affected social dislocation in many parts of the world. As argued by Kolodner (1995), norms of equality and egalitarianism have tended to delegitimize previous hierarchical structures in many societies. Old patterns of behavior have become undermined as traditional power relations have become democratized. There are two basic consequences of this: (1) Old ways of getting things done are eliminated, which tends to leave behind only uncertainty; and (2) the structures that identified the community and bound it together are also being eliminated, which has a disintegrative effect.²

¹ For general accounts of globalization, see Baylis and Smith (2002) and Held and McGrew (1999). For more skeptical accounts, see Hirst and Thompson (1996) and Scott (1997). For more critical accounts, see Axtman (1998), Scholte (2000), and Appadurai (1993). For the relationship between modernity and globalization, see Giddens (1990), Alam (1999), Bauman (2001), Hoogvelt (2001), and Hall (1992). For an in-depth analysis of the main argument of this article with a specific focus on India, see Kinnvall (in press).

² The fact that I only point to problematic aspects of democratization does not exclude a number of positive effects, such as increased equality and rule of law instead of rule of man. Traditional structures have often served to justify unequal relationships based on inheritance, gender, class, caste, or other unequal power hierarchies, and the breakdown of these structures can have liberating and challenging effects.

Both consequences are dislocating and indicate how globalization is intimately connected to security. The extent to which migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are now framed in terms of security threats provides further evidence of the relationship between globalization and security (see Gibney, 2002). Hence, it is difficult to ignore how concerns about the economic, cultural, and social threats posed by refugees and other immigrants have tended to make their way into security considerations in both Western and non-Western societies. The recent use of anti-terrorist acts to detain foreign residents for an unlimited time without charging them with a crime is yet another indication of the tension created by this process as state rights are pitted against individual rights.

These global changes have meant that an increasing number of people now lack the protective cocoon of relational ties that shielded community members and groups in the past (Giddens, 1990). In this wider sense, globalization tends to break down

the protective framework of the small community and of tradition replacing these with many larger, impersonal organizations. The individual feels bereft and alone in a world in which she or he lacks the psychological support and the sense of security provided by more traditional settings. (Giddens, 1991, p. 33)

The abstract character of modern society, with its implicit anonymity and alienation, has made the lives of more individuals migratory, ever-changing, and mobile as they are uprooted from their original social milieu. The result, according to Berger, has been increasing attempts to “de-modernize” in order to seek “reversal of the modern trend that have left the individual ‘alienated’ and beset with the threats of meaninglessness” (Berger, in Pathak, 1998, p. 22). Going back to an imagined past by using reconstructed symbols and cultural reference points is, in other words, a response to the destabilizing effects of changing patterns of global mobility and migration. It is an attempt to recreate a lost sense of security.

(In)security as a “Thick Signifier”

But what does it mean to recreate such a lost sense of security in light of globalization, and how are we to conceive of the concepts of security and insecurity in the first place? Approaching the concept of (in)security is not a simple task. Rather than defining it or addressing it from an analytical-conceptual perspective, I agree with Huysmans (1998) that we have a lot to gain by analyzing security as a *thick signifier*. A thick signifier approach throws light on the contextual aspects of security, as it implies a search for key dimensions of the wider order of meaning within which the framework itself is established. As argued by Huysmans,

In a thick signifier analysis, one tries to understand how security language implies a specific metaphysics of life. The interpretation does not

just explain how a security story requires the definition of threats, a referent object, etc. but also how it defines our relations to nature, to other human beings and to the self. (1998, p. 231)

Security as a thick signifier thus places an individual or a group inside the wider discursive and institutional continuities within which they are embedded. Approaching security as a thick signifier means unmasking those structural relations through which security discourses are framed. These structural relations reflect the division and inequality of power between those involved and affected by the discourse. This means that those who produce the discourse also have the power to make it “true”—that is, to enforce a particular reading of a threat according to which people and groups are defined (see Foucault, 1980, p. 201). This power to make a discourse “true” is particularly evident in cases where one group holds more privileges and resources and when it uses the language of “difference” as a way to legitimize its own dominance and marginalize others (van Dijk, 1997, pp. 32–33). Security as a thick signifier thus highlights the dynamics behind people’s and groups’ different senses of security by clarifying how societies institutionally and discursively position people into structures of marginalization. It provides the means with which to discuss real economic and social asymmetries, both between and within societies.

We cannot grasp the emergence of Bin Laden and al-Qaida, for instance, without realizing the extent to which many emerging Arab countries pursued paths of modernization and development that were Western-inspired in the early post–Second World War independence period. These reforms were initiated by the state, not by the people, and were often rationalized by the belief that it was the “modern” educated few that were charting the future for the more “traditional” and less educated sectors of society. As the reforms became expressed in developmental models and endorsed by the elites, the uncertainty created by the demise of such experiments created a disillusioned youth revolt in many Arab countries. Refuge was sought in the older and more familiar concepts. For the Egyptians, for instance, this meant an identity based on patriotism and religion, and for Saudi Arabians, an identity based on Arab ethnicism and Islamic guardianship (Ayubi, 1999; Haddad & Esposito, 1998).

These movements’ existence and their power of attraction have thus been framed as a response to a combined socioeconomic and religious reality for many (particularly young male) people who experience the effects of politics at home or as exiles. At the same time, these movements have also been a reaction to a highly political power struggle involving state decision-makers in the former Soviet Union, the United States, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and other societies. Analyzing security as a thick signifier thus makes us realize how structural conditions of insecurity are intimately linked to the emotional significance of identity mobilization. In this regard, those who engage in resistance politics tend to feel a genuine sense of loss as expressed in the recreation of a real

or imagined past, or through the distant and often romanticized memory of a home. In the process of identity mobilization, these are all likely to become political weapons. As Nandy (1997) has noted in relation to expatriate South Asians,

in recent years many expatriate South Asians in the West have become more aggressively traditional, and more culturally exclusive and chauvinistic. As their cherished world becomes more difficult to sustain, as they and their children begin to show symptoms of integration into their adopted land, they become more protective about what they think are their faiths and cultures. (p. 158)

The feelings described by Nandy are evidence of the destabilizing effects of the global-local nexus. A thick signifier approach takes into consideration the consequences of modernity and structural inequalities while retaining a focus on the emotions involved in this process. As people feel increasingly uncertain about their daily life, the search for security takes on ontological and existential dimensions.

Ontological Security and Existential Anxiety

At an individual level, ontological security is provided by the belief that the story (the discourse) being told is a good one, one that rests on solid ground. “Ontological security” and “existential anxiety” are essential ingredients in Giddens’ (1991) theory of human existence. Ontological security refers to a “person’s fundamental sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people. Obtaining such trust becomes necessary in order for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety” (Giddens, 1991, pp. 38–39). Stated in simple terms, ontological security is a security of being, a sense of confidence and trust that the world is what it appears to be. Trust of other people is like an emotional inoculation against existential anxieties—“a protection against future threat and dangers which allows the individual to sustain hope and courage in the face of whatever debilitating circumstances she or he might later confront” (Giddens, 1991, p. 39). In this Giddens relied on Erikson (1950), whose approach to identity signifies the closeness between identity and security. Identity, in Erikson’s work, is seen as an anxiety-controlling mechanism reinforcing a sense of trust, predictability, and control in reaction to disruptive change by reestablishing a previous identity or formulating a new one (Kinnvall, 2004).

For Giddens then, like Erikson, self-identity consists of the development of a consistent feeling of biographical continuity where the individual is able to sustain a narrative about the self and answer questions about doing, acting, and being.³

³ Although I proceed from Giddens’ treatment of security, it should be noted that aspects of his conceptions of self as constituting a core self are problematic (see, e.g., Barker, 1999; Featherstone, 1995; Robertson, 1992).

Maintaining such a narrative is not easy, however, as the literature on globalization, diaspora, refugees, and migration has shown (see, e.g., Bauman, 2001; Castles & Davidson, 2000; Ong, 1999). Migration, in this sense, is both a structural and a psychological process. It is often characterized by a sense of powerlessness and dependence as insecurity is increasing among many migrants. This is frequently mixed with an acute anxiety about their new circumstances and strong feelings of homelessness.

The very category of “home” as a bearer of security can be found in its ability to link together a material environment with a deeply emotional set of meanings relating to permanence and continuity (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998, p. 30). Ontological security is maintained when home is able to provide a site of constancy in the social and material environment. Home, in this sense, constitutes a spatial context in which daily routines of human existence are performed. It is a domain where people feel most in control of their lives because they feel free from the social pressure that is part of the contemporary world. Home, in other words, is a secure base on which identities are constructed (Dupuis & Thorns, 1998, p. 28). Homelessness is exactly the opposite, as it is characterized by impermanence and discontinuity.

When home as a category of security is lost as a result of rapid socioeconomic changes, then new avenues or a new home—a new identity—for ontological security are sought. This is similar to Sylvester’s (1994) and Kronsell’s (2002) discussions of homesteading as a strategy for coping with homelessness. Homesteading as a strategy means making and shaping a political space for oneself in order to surpass the life of contradictions and anxieties of homelessness. This may simply involve becoming a member of an exile community (such as the Sikhs in Canada, the Pakistanis in Britain, or the Kurds in Sweden) by finding common places of assembly (such as gurdwaras, mosques, or Kurdish community halls). In cases of rapid domestic change and real or perceived structural inequality, this may involve joining a local identity-based group that seems to provide answers and stability (such as the Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia, the Rashtriya Swayamseval Sangh in India, or the Maoist guerillas in Nepal). The fact that many of these people find themselves both structurally marginalized and ontologically insecure often gives rise to a politics of resistance and the growth of local identities.

In relation to this, Giddens’ notions of ontological security and existential anxiety are fruitful for understanding the global-local nexus as psychologized discourses of domination and resistance. As Sigel (1989) has noted, “There exists in humans a powerful drive to maintain the sense of one’s identity, a sense of continuity that allays fear of changing too fast or being changed against one’s will by outside forces” (p. 459). Globalization has made it more difficult, but not less desirable, to think in terms of singular, integrated, and harmonious identities as individuals constantly tune their actions to an increasing number of others and issues. The fact that individuals search for one stable identity does not mean, however, that such identities exist. Rather, we need to understand identity not as

a fixed, natural state of being, but as a *process of becoming*. As argued by Hall (1992), “If we feel that we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or ‘narrative about the self’ about ourselves” (p. 227).

This view has much in common with the social constructionist position as represented by scholars like Harré (1987), Shotter (1985), and Gergen (2000). Social constructionists argue against the notion of a core self. Hence, instead of focusing on individual psychological processes, emphasis is given to the situated linguistic and narrative construction of identity. Proceeding from Bakhtin’s theory of dialogism, so-called dialogical self-narratives are linguistically constituted and reconstituted through people’s relationships. Rather than representing some kinds of “core selves,” these self-narratives become “as-if selves,” through which we present ourselves “as if” we were bearers of lasting identities. In reality, however, this process only refers to individuals’ current perception of themselves as constructed in the actual dialogue (Gergen, 2000). This is what Shotter (1985) called social accountability.

Social constructionism, like poststructuralist perspectives more generally, has been criticized for not being able to determine meaning here and now, as identity is constantly negotiated and in flux (Kinnvall, 2003). Like postmodernism, it has also been accused of providing descriptions of how reality looks at the same time as it denies any essentialist assumptions of the nature of reality. Thus, reality is “really” heterogeneous, constantly changeable, and open to interpretation (Flax, 1990). In addition, a constructionist perspective finds it difficult to account for the *emotional* underpinnings of identity construction as manifest in the actual *need* to construct a comforting story about the self, about ourselves.

At the same time, however, it is exactly because of its ability to locate identity construction in the *process of becoming* that social constructionism is able to explain collective identity as something more than the sum of the individuals involved. Through its focus on the structural underpinnings of identity, a social constructionist approach thus provides the foundation for analyzing (in)security as a thick signifier. However, the focus on (in)security understood as a thick signifier adds an important emotional dimension to the constructionist approach. Emphasizing (in)security as an inherent component of power relations actualizes the *need* for one stable and comforting identity. This need is likely to be heightened in uncertain circumstances brought about by forces beyond our control, such as globalization.

To sum up, analyzing security as a thick signifier means analyzing what goes into this story or narrative about the self, about ourselves. It means investigating the structural reasons for why individuals experience insecurity as well as the emotional responses to these feelings of ontological insecurity and existential anxiety. A thick signifier approach highlights the intersubjective ordering of relations—that is, how individuals define themselves in relation to others according to their structural basis of power. This implies that individuals experience differ-

ent levels of security in relation to their own and others' perceptions of the structural power position they are currently in. As their ontological insecurity increases, they attempt to *securitize subjectivity*, which means an intensified search for *one* stable identity (regardless of its actual existence).

This invariably involves a process of establishing and confirming certain identity traits in yourself and the juxtaposition of these to others. Securitizing subjectivity always involves a stranger-other, because the self is not a static object but is part of a larger process of identity construction. This larger process is ultimately intersubjective, implying that internalized self-notions can never be separated from self/other representations and are always responsive to new interpersonal relationships (Ogilvie & Ashmore, 1991, p. 286). This raises two questions: (1) What happens to notions of self, other, and identity in this process? (2) Why is it that certain collective responses (such as nationalism and religion) are more likely than others?

Securitized Subjectivity: Others and the Emotional Aspects of Identity Construction

Identity and the relationship between self and society have been approached in many different ways within a broad range of literature. Deaux (1996), for example, differentiated among identity as understood in developmental theories in psychology, identity as studied within symbolic interactionism in sociology, and identity as understood in social identity theory in social psychology. Lemert (1994) and Mennell (1994) distinguished between identity as used in political science and macrosociology (identifying broad social categories) and identity as used in psychology and microsociology (accounting for a more subjective version of some kind of unique "self").

From the perspective of securitizing subjectivity in relation to a subject other, it appears, at least at first glance, as if social identity theory and its derivative, self-categorization theory, would be particularly useful devices for understanding the construction of self and others. Social identity theories have their roots in Tajfel's (1970, 1982) minimal group paradigm, which shows that individuals tend to favor their own group (ingroup) in relation to other groups (outgroups) even when the group formation per se is relatively meaningless. This has to do with the fact that groups give their members self-esteem and that individuals are therefore motivated to improve the status of the ingroup in relation to the outgroup (see also Billig & Tajfel, 1973; Hogg, 1992; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Whereas the early work by Tajfel and Turner was focused on the psychological motivation of group membership, the self-categorization theory developed by Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell (1987; see also Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Turner, 1994) has been focused more on the cognitive underpinnings of social identity. In contrast to social identity theory's binary distinction

between personal and social identity, self-categorization theory conceptualizes self at different levels of abstraction (personal, intergroup, and interspecies) and expresses a more marked fluidity in identity formation as individuals constantly shift back and forth between an individual and a social identity (Monroe, Hankins, & Van Vechten, 2000; Oakes et al., 1994). Individuals are said to be more likely to think of themselves as members of social groups under conditions in which that group membership maximizes the similarities between oneself and other group members at the same time as it increases the dissimilarities with other groups⁴ (Turner et al., 1987; see also Huddy, 2001; Kinnvall, 2003; Monroe et al., 2000).

Based mainly (but not only) on psychological experiments, social identity theory and self-categorization theory have made some important observations concerning the tendency among individuals to positively regard themselves and their group in relation to other groups. Also of importance is the way these theories are able to account for the psychological processes by which the self is redefined in terms of group norms and the associated stereotypes of particular social categories (Monroe et al., 2000). Their strength can further be found in the attempts made to explain the behavior of large-scale collectivities rather than just the small groups of laboratory research (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). There are, however, a number of reasons why I find this literature problematic for understanding the subjective process of securitizing subjectivity and the role of others within this process.

One has to do with the limited treatment of ideology, culture, and discourse, which I believe makes it difficult to fully understand why some individuals of the group are prepared to make sacrifices for the group while others stay marginally involved in group activities. "Self-categorization theory," as argued by Reicher and Hopkins (2001), "tends to treat context as if it were a given and categories as if they are largely read off from this context" (p. 39). Here I believe a thick signifier approach is more fruitful for understanding identity formation and identity mobilization, as it is focused on unmasking those structural relations through which security discourses are framed, thus reflecting inequality and unequal power relations in a certain context.

Another reason can be found in these theories' often essentialist treatment of identity as something more ascribed than acquired. As noted by Huddy (2001), the minimal intergroup situation does not allow for identity choice and thus remains a deeply deterministic view of identity development. To this could be added the difference between belonging to a group and internalizing its meaning. This refers to the distinction between belonging to a common category by sharing certain characteristics obvious to the outsider, and group membership that is

⁴ This shift between personal and social identity has to do with relative accessibility (e.g., that political scientists try to differentiate themselves in relation to each other but tend to stand united in meetings with, e.g., biologists) and metacontrast (the differences between group members, e.g., academics, become unimportant when confronted by another group, e.g., politicians).

meaningful for the actual definition of oneself and one's identity (Jenkins, 1996, p. 23; see discussion in Huddy, 2001). With its strong focus on categorization as a constant cognitive aim, self-categorization theory may find it difficult to explain subjective interpretations of what different group memberships mean for the individual. This, in turn, is likely to affect its explanatory power for understanding how previously harmless others may suddenly become reconstructed into the stranger-enemy.⁵

Hence, to understand what happens to notions of self and other within this process, we need to go further than traditional approaches within the social identity literature are able to do. The aim is to "shed light on how identifications of the 'inside' link to the regulatory power of the discursive 'outside'" (Barker, 1999, pp. 18–19). This means comprehending why feelings of fear, loathing, and even hatred creep into "our" perceptions of "them," and how these feelings act as common denominators in times of uncertainty. Here psychoanalysis has particular importance for understanding the issue of securitized subjectivity in relation to the stranger-other.

Psychoanalytical accounts of identity and identity conflict, such as Bion's (1961), Craib's (1989, 1994), Kristeva's (1982, 1991), and Volkan's (1988, 1997), put an emphasis on understanding present actions in the light of both the past and the future, at the same time as they provide explicit accounts of the emotional aspects of these processes. In their focus on the inner dimension of identity construction, they are predominantly concerned with the acquisition of identity in the process of socialization, rather than with roles and status positions, as has been the case with many sociological theories of symbolic interactionism. Craib (1994), for instance, criticized symbolic interactionists, such as Jenkins, for putting too much emphasis on the external dimension of Mead's "me" and thus omitting the unconscious and emotional dimensions of identity. In a similar vein, he argued that poststructuralists like Hall or social constructionists like Burkitt or Gergen, who all give credit to a psychoanalytic dimension of identity, still reduce the unconscious to a social product or language, or reduce emotions to present social

⁵ This agrees with Billig's (1987) critique of self-categorization theory and its belief that human beings have a natural tendency to categorize and that categorization reflects a cognitive necessity. It should be noted, however, that a number of authors interpret social identity and self-categorization theory in a wider sense. Both Huddy (2001) and Reicher and Hopkins (2001), for instance, made some interesting suggestions on how to extend self-categorization theory to account for context, meaning, choice, and change. Here I find Reicher and Hopkins' argument particularly useful, as they agreed with categorization theory that categories shape collective mobilizations, but argued that these definitions not only are perceptions of the present but also are attempts to make the future. The definition that best succeeds in ordering the future is more important than whether it accurately represents the present. This is in agreement with a thick signifier approach that intends to deconstruct existing power relations in society by focusing on those who produce the discourse—those who make it "true"—to understand the discursive effects of one's location in the power structure of a society. The emphasis on discourse constitutes, in my opinion, a wider approach to the study of collective identity than that of categorization, as it allows categories to be an intrinsic (but unfixed) part of the discursive ordering of social relations.

relations in society (Craib, 1989; Vogler, 2000). Instead, Craib suggested that we must understand the emotional dimension of social identities and social relationship from the psychoanalytic concept of emotional subjectivity as recognized within the object relations theory of psychoanalysis, especially as developed through the works of Klein and Winnicott.

I agree with Craib that too strong an emphasis on social context tends to ignore the emotional dimension of subjectivity and makes it difficult to understand the need for securitized subjectivity. However, a psychoanalytic focus cannot replace that of a more structural approach, only complement it. What psychoanalysis is able to do, however—as Craib also suggested—is to give emphasis to the inner life of human beings by seeing individuals as linked not only structurally but also through emotional intersubjectivity in which they continually receive and give emotional messages that often exist at an unconscious level. The works of Volkan and Kristeva⁶ are, in my opinion, particularly valuable for providing such an additional understanding of the emotional dimension of securitized subjectivity.

The Formation of We-Images: The Other as an Object or an Subject

Both Volkan and Kristeva emphasize the search for stable, clearly defined boundaries in the formation of self. Volkan (1997, pp. 27–29), using object relations theory,⁷ suggested the analogy of a large-scale tent in order to explore group psychology in a more comprehensive way. He invited us to think of ourselves in terms of learning to wear, from childhood on, two layers of clothing, where the first layer fits snugly (the personal identity) while the second layer (the social identity) is a loose covering that protects the individual in the way a parent, close family members, or other caregivers protect the subject (the ethnic, emotionally bonded large group). Because this garment is not tight-fitting, it also shelters other members of the group and thus resembles a large canvas tent. The introduction of traumatic events is likely to raise anxiety in the tent and may jeopardize the collective sense of self.

Volkan's analogy of a canvas tent is interesting, but it has the problem of providing a picture of boundedness, of inside-out perceptions, rather than identity as a contested process. However, as a description of how categories are imagined as

⁶ The choice of these two authors is motivated by the fact that they proceed from two different but related post-Freudian bodies of work within the psychoanalytical tradition. Kristeva proceeds from a Lacanian (or neo-Lacanian) perspective, whereas Volkan takes an object relations approach as developed by Winnicott. I see these authors as, if not representative, then at least illustrative of two large bodies of psychoanalytical studies. The fact that both of them deal with the real occurrences of group conflict (particularly Volkan), rather than with pure theory or experimental work, adds to their usefulness. The works of Volkan and Kristeva have been compared by Murer (1999), and the following account owes a lot to his interesting and insightful analysis of these authors.

⁷ Object relations theory is mostly associated with Winnicott, who proceeded from the premise that human beings by nature are "object-seeking."

essentialized bodies, it is important, and so is his emphasis on how traumatic events may affect a collective sense of self. A greater problem, as noted by Murer (1999), is to be found in Volkan's use of object relations theory, which, by viewing the other as an object, implies that the enemy-other *already* exists and *is* different from the self. This is problematic, as it may hint at an essentialist view of both self and other.

Kristeva's treatment of self and other responds to this problem. Proceeding from a Lacanian (or neo-Lacanian) conception of the unconscious, she sees the creation of self as an internal psychological process. She suggests that the antidote to xenophobia, racism, and the marginalization of others is to recognize the foreigner within ourselves: "He is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself" (Kristeva, 1991, p. 1). The other exists in our minds through imagination even when he or she is not physically present. The existence of anti-Semitism in Poland despite its relative lack of Jews is suggestive of this power of imagination (Murer, 1999), and so is the fact that anti-immigrant feelings are sometimes stronger in places with few or no immigrants than in places that have experienced large immigration (Kinnvall, in press). This implies that the enemy-other is not only created by the self, but has been a previous part of the self. This unconscious self is neither an object nor a subject; it is an *object*. "Object. It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 4). The construction of an object-other becomes a means to securitize subjectivity as it reduces anxiety and increases ontological security.

Abjection is caused by that which disturbs identity, system, or order, such as traumatic changes in the light of globalization. Object becomes a major ingredient of collective identity formation when the familiar "stranger" is suddenly recognized as a threat. Arguments, demonstrations, proofs, etc.—the very logic of the symbolic—must follow and conform to such abjection (Kristeva, 1982, p. 15). A number of past and current identity conflicts have shown how abjection happens time and again in neighborhoods previously characterized by more or less amicable (but at least cordial) relations between members of various groups. The horrendous activities after the creation of Pakistan in 1947, where Hindus and Muslims were turned against each other and slaughtered, is an example of this, and so is the looting and burning of Sikh homes in Delhi after Indira Gandhi had been shot by her Sikh bodyguards in 1984. As Norton (1988) has noted, it is only when categories of self and other are empirically dubious that they emerge with clarity:

Individual and collective identities are created not simply in the difference between self and other but in those moments of ambiguity where one is other to oneself, and in the recognition of the other as like. (p. 7)

Those aspects that the self experiences as dangerous and unpleasant are projected onto the other. Rather than existing in an objective sense, as Volkan argues, the

differences between self and other are psychologically created and perceived by the self (Kristeva, 1982, pp. 183–184; Murer, 1999). To assure the self of how it is essentially different from the other, the other needs to be systematically debased, because without such debasement of the other,

whom I reject and with whom I identify, I lose my boundaries, I no longer have a container, the memory of experiences when I had been abandoned overwhelm me, I lose my composure. I feel “lost,” “indistinct,” “hazy.” (Kristeva, 1991, p. 187)

Debasement of the other thus captures the essential connection between fear and desire. By demonizing the other, the self becomes sufficiently sacralized. This is similar to Volkan’s discussion of projection and dehumanization. Here the other is often perceived as being dirty. When, for instance, “one group insists that the other has a darker color, smells bad, or does dirty deeds, they are rejecting the other as if they were faeces” (Volkan, 1997, p. 113). The other is viewed with contempt, as a despicable and worthless nonhuman. As argued by Murer (1999), once the other has been so thoroughly reduced to inhumanity, any required act to maintain the boundaries of self and other can be justified. The stranger needs to be turned into an enemy. As Huysmans (1998) noted,

Different from enemies, strangers are disordering because they express the possibility of chaos within the existing order. . . . Strangers are both inside and outside a society; they are insiders/outsideers. They articulate ambivalence and therefore challenge the (modern) ordering activity which relies on reducing ambiguity and uncertainty by categorizing elements. (p. 241)

By ordering the other both structurally (e.g., immigrants as “bogus” asylum seekers) and psychologically (by turning the stranger into an enemy), a discourse of exclusion is constructed. Those who do not (seem to) subscribe to a common belief system thus challenge the very foundation of the group: “Like a besieged city, the movement must strengthen its walls against the enemy without and search for enemies within. True belief does not permit question and doubt” (Robins & Post, 1997, pp. 94–95). Such a discourse, as Jabri (1996, p. 130) has shown, articulates separateness, limitations to access, and strict boundedness. It divides self and other into deserving and guilty parts. The other, in being turned from stranger to enemy, is increasingly viewed as a nonhuman. The 9/11 attacks, for instance, were possible because of the perpetrators’ ability to see the passengers on the planes and those working in the World Trade Center and Pentagon as enemies rather than strangers. And this is also the case in countless other attacks on innocent people who are made group representatives, whether these are Catholic school girls in Northern Ireland, Kurds in Iraq, Jews in France, Muslims in the United States, Western Europe, or India, whites in Zimbabwe, blacks in England, the United States, or Australia, and so on.

This process of turning the stranger into an enemy is an attempt to securitize subjectivity in times of uncertainty. Within this process, self and other are both seen as essentialized bodies, which means reducing self and other to a number of cultural characteristics. These characteristics, although constructed and fabricated, come to be seen as natural, unified features for describing the group.

*Trauma, Fear, and the Use of Historical and Archaeological
“Evidence” in the Process*

In this process of securitizing subjectivity, hate becomes the link among the present, the future, and a re-created past. In this sense it serves as a social chain for successive generations as a particular event or trauma becomes mythologized and intertwined with a group's sense of self. As observed by Murer (1999), it is this process that often leads people to conclude that ethnic conflicts are timeless. This is what Volkan (1997, p. 36) called a “chosen trauma.” A chosen trauma describes the mental recollection of a calamity that befell a group's ancestors and includes information, fantasized expectations, intense feelings, and defenses against unacceptable thought. As a concept it is useful for understanding how feelings of “ancient hatred” are constructed and maintained. These are not, as today's mass media often make them out to be, primordial feelings of hatred or ingrained hostilities waiting to break out in a largely chaotic world. Instead, they are structural and psychological components that manifest themselves in chosen traumas.

Chosen traumas—and their opposites, “chosen glories” (which may be reactivated to bolster a group's self-esteem) (Volkan, 1997, p. 81)—thus provide comforting stories in times of increased ontological insecurity and existential anxiety. They are the means through which subjectivity becomes securitized in relation to others. Most comforting among these stories are those that provide a feeling of home, stability, and continuity while individuals and groups are beset by experiences of loss, alienation, and helplessness. A chosen trauma is often used to interpret new traumas. It brings with it powerful experiences of loss and feelings of humiliation, vengeance, and hatred that trigger a variety of unconscious defense mechanisms that attempt to reverse these experiences and feelings. Every new context is used to validate these feelings (Volkan, 1997, p. 82). Humans, Volkan argues, cannot accept change without mourning what is lost. Chosen traumas and chosen glories provide, in other words, the linking objects for later generations to be rediscovered, reinterpreted, and reused.

Memories of a past trauma may lie dormant for generations, only to be rediscovered as a collectivity experiences a new or secondary trauma that may have little to do with the first chosen trauma (Murer, 1999). In India, for instance, mosques like the Babri Masjid and similar sacred places are increasingly being portrayed as symbols of Hindu subjection during the times of the Mughuls. This makes their destruction a necessary part of the liberation movement of the Hindus and works as a strategy to deny creativity to the Muslims (Bhattacharya, 1991,

p. 128; Kinnvall, in press). The linking cycle can be found in the repeated usage of the same subject-other, as it allows the younger generation to experience the pain and the loss of their elders.

Both chosen traumas and chosen glories are intimately connected to images of the nation and to religion. In looking for the nation, nationalism needs to demonstrate that the nation it wishes to create has always existed. Traumas through which the nation was lost, such as colonialization, are at the heart of this search. In this sense they are frequently loaded with affective images of what existed before the “rape of the nation” by the colonial masters. Such narratives are often deeply rooted in religious discourse, relating the present search for the nation to a glorified past prior to colonialization. Religious and cultural rituals and ritualistic observances of anniversaries can serve to sustain the trauma and feed into the continued demonization of the other while sacralizing the self.

Through the use of symbols, memories, myths, and heritage, the attempt is to trace the (constructed) genealogy of an identity group back to a specific place, time, and ancestor in order to derive an ideological lineage and to provide a guide for future actions. Religion is a powerful reservoir, as religious revelations are turned into national shrines, religious miracles become national feasts, and holy scriptures are reinterpreted as national epics. Hence, by turning history into a chosen trauma or a chosen glory, it becomes a “naturalized” past of an identity group’s definition of self and other (Smith, 2000, p. 80). The combination of empiricist verification of so-called “facts” and the spread of mass media has played an important part in this process (Aggestam & Kinnvall, 2002).

This is particularly visible in those cases where archaeology is used together with ancient texts as a means of conjuring up negative images, stereotypes, and xenophobic prejudices of the other. Archaeology and historical verifications of certain myths and events can thus be used to fuel the dynamics of violent conflicts. Such myths are commonly used not only for constructing, cementing, and mobilizing an identity group, but also for constructing an other upon which emotions can be directed in a conflictual situation. As argued by Coningham and Lewer (2000), the verification of archaeology and historical evidence is crucial in the consolidation of an identity. Hence, in areas experiencing violent conflicts, we see an upsurge in the manipulation and reinterpretation of historical and archaeological evidence to support claims of precedence to land and rights for particular identity groups.

Both the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the Middle East and the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India show, for instance, how chosen traumas have been verified through a historical and archaeological process. Israeli archaeology has deciphered the historical landscape of *Eretz Yisrael*, and Indian material findings have established a physical foundation of the Hindu *Rashtra*, or Hindustan. In both of these examples, several historical places have been turned into sacred and national sites that serve as chosen traumas linking the past of their ancestors to contemporary times (Aggestam & Kinnvall, 2002).

What Kristeva and Volkan show in their different interpretations is how feelings of “ancient hatred” can be constructed and maintained. By emphasizing the other as a mental image, an intrapsychic abject-other onto which the self projects its (or the group’s) unwanted (constructed) traits, we may escape the tendency to describe conflicts in essentialized terms. The emphasis on traumatic events, shared anxiety, regression, stressful conditions, and disturbances also brings attention to the emotional aspects of human relatedness as defined in (global) structural terms. In combination with the significance given to chosen traumas and chosen glories and the belief in “verification” of history, it becomes increasingly clear that we must understand the need for securitized subjectivity as existing in the nexus of structural and psychological processes. As individuals experience increased levels of ontological insecurity and existential anxiety in relation to global forces, the search for securitized subjectivity is likely to increase. This raises the final question: What possible group reactions may arise in response to this search?

Nationalism, Religion, and the Global-Local Nexus: The Search for Identity and Meaning

As noted above, nationalism and religion are both intimately linked to chosen traumas and chosen glories. This link makes them particularly powerful identity-signifiers in times of uncertain structural conditions, with the implication that they are likely to become more persuasive rallying points than other identity-signifiers. There are at least two reasons for this. One has to do with the close link between the history of individualism and that of nationalism and religion; another can be found in the close relationship between nationalism/religion and hierarchical race/gender structures. In the following, I show how these links make nationalism and religion more convincing responses than other identity-signifiers to the individual need for securitized subjectivity. Note that I give prominence to those aspects of nationalism and religion that make them powerful identity-signifiers in times of ontological insecurity and existential anxiety. These are the aspects that make fundamentalism possible in regard to both nationalism and religion. This is not to say that either of these are fundamentalist per se, or that they cannot also be positive forces.

Linking Nationalism and Religion: Individualism and the Enlightenment Project

The rise of the “modern” state in Europe after the absolute monarchies was based on the unification of territories, reliance on popular participation, and the assertion of clear borders rather than frontiers. It involved the pacification of life within state boundaries, fostering internal integration and homogenization. The growing importance of nationalism was founded on the idea that political power should reflect the will of “the people.” Such “a people” were seen as a unified

force, and the ideal was that the boundaries of the state should reflect those of the nation (see Calhoun, 1997, pp. 66–85; Giddens, 1984). The most influential idea behind nationalism thus came to be the notion of the individual self as a united, self-sufficient, and self-contained entity—a “universal self.” This self takes its point of departure in the historically embodied form of the Enlightenment, connecting reason, knowledge, progress, freedom, and ethical action into a combined label of progress and modernity.⁸ The main structural arrangement that makes this self-moving individual into a united whole is the modern state (Parekh, 1995). Within this conformative process, institutions tend to essentialize individuals by providing them with identities based on historically specific traits, which are then claimed to be those of human nature.

Nationalism thus relies on a construction of the *nation-as-this* and the *people-as-one*, which are supposed to guide social and political action in the name of a particular *ethnos* (being Indian, for instance) and a certain imagined national space (India as the locus of Indianness) (Torfing, 1999, p. 193). As noted by Reicher and Hopkins (2001), “if national mobilization depends upon national identity, then establishing identity depends upon embedding it within an essentializing historical narrative” (p. 51). The fact that these essentialist attributes are called upon to mobilize people into collective action should not lead us to believe that they are attributes of a nation, however, as nationhood cannot be defined objectively, prior to political processes, on either cultural or social structural grounds (Calhoun, 1994, p. 132). Rather, nations are in part made by nationalism and exist only when their members make sense of themselves through the discursive framework of national identity.

Religion shares many of the characteristics of nationalism, and religion and nationalism are often mixed. Despite this being the case, the religious element in the study of nationalist movements is often neglected or dismissed. According to Himmelfarb (in Haynes, 1999, p. 32), this has to do with religion being viewed as the opposite of the Enlightenment’s principles of rationalism, universalism, secularism, and materialism. However, this is to ignore the similarities between the individual self of the Enlightenment tradition (as manifest in nationalism) and the bases of religious identity. Thus, in comparison to other discursive identity constructions, both national and religious identity make claims to a monolithic and abstract identity—that is, to *one* stable identity that answers to the need for securitized subjectivity (Kinnvall, 2002b). With its very long history, this monolithic “entity” becomes a stabilizing anchor in an otherwise chaotic and changing world, linking the past and the present to future action.

Like the nation, religion thus consists of a discursive, often essentialist, view of its realm as an organic whole, as an individual whose various aspects or dimensions are inextricably related. To retain their institutionalized identity in some form or other, all religions have to maintain themselves, and to do so they have to have some superior claim to a particular notion of truth and mode of earthly

⁸ As noted by Flax (1990), this is obviously a drastic reduction of complex ideas.

existence (Alam, 1999; Bidwai, Mukhia, & Vanaik, 1996). In a similar sense to how the nation, in the absence of nationalism, may exist discursively in people's self-definition while lacking in power, noninstitutionalized religion may be a matter of personal faith, piety, and inner experience, but once institutionalized it becomes interested in maintaining its hold on the populace and social institutions.

Institutionalized religion often concurs with the nation as being territorially defined, as it refers to bounded entities such as churches, organizations, or political parties (Haynes, 1997). In this form, religion, like nationalism, supplies existential answers to individuals' quests for security by essentializing the product and providing a picture of totality, unity, and wholeness. The fact that God has set the rules and made them difficult to contest relieves the individual psychologically from the responsibility of having to choose (Jurgensmeyer, 2000; Mol, 1976). By supplying a consistent structure, religion thus provides order from the chaos and uncertainty in the world. In doing this, religion and nationalism both provide answers to questions concerning existence itself, the external world and human life, the existence of "the other," and what self-identity actually is.⁹ In providing answers to these questions, they also institute a notion of "truth," implying an automatic exclusion of those who do not adhere to such a "truth." Religion, especially in its monotheistic form, thus provides a foundation for the creation of intolerance against those who do not share in these beliefs.

There is obviously a difference between religion in a more fundamentalist form and religion as a cultural experience, where the latter may have an empathetic relation with political power even when opposed to it, as well as a readiness to accommodate secular thought (see Haynes, 1997). However, both forms of religion (like nationalism) may constitute a means to resist too much fluidity in the interpretation of their borders. Nandy's (1997, pp. 157–158) argument—that secularism as an ideology can thrive only in a society that is predominantly nonsecular—is of relevance here. Nandy's point is that once a society becomes secularized, in the sense that people become more aware of the fact that they live in an increasingly desacralized world, they tend to resist this change by searching for ideologies linked to faiths that can help in negating the world they live in.

Globalization, privatization, consumerism, and the spread of Western ideas and practices have been effective in speeding up such processes. In response to these modern developments, religious leaders may talk about moral or ethical decline by pointing to modern society's lack of morality, loss of ethical values, increased corruption, and so on, where the only answer to the current "decay" is a return to traditional values and religious norms (Beyer, 1994). Religion can supply this answer either in a privatized form or as part of a larger social movement seeking wider public influence. Both forms answer to feelings of existential anxiety and ontological insecurity as individuals attempt to securitize subjectivity, thus illuminating how security works as a thick signifier.

⁹ To be ontologically secure and avoid existential anxiety means to Giddens (1991, pp. 51–53) that we can provide "answers" to fundamental existential questions, such as those outlined here.

However, in the latter case (religion as part of a larger social movement), religious beliefs are often pitted against secular historians on the one hand, and against rival notions of what constitutes a particular religion in terms of tradition and history on the other. Religion, like the nation, is not “just there” in any objective sense of the term but must be rediscovered, reinvented, and reconceptualized every time it is called upon as an answer to ontological insecurity. The major world religions may have fixed texts, “but they do not have fixed beliefs, only fixed interpretations of those beliefs” (Thomas, 1999, p. 37). The more essentialist such interpretations can become in establishing links with past events, such as the historical significance of a place or a building, the more successful they will be in terms of inclusiveness and exclusiveness—in creating boundaries between self and other.¹⁰ Many such places (churches, temples, mosques, gurdwaras, synagogues, etc.) constitute controversial and contested sites and are often the sites of competing narratives and historical “facts.” They are parts of the chosen trauma (or chosen glory) that define self and other in historical terms. As van der Veer (1996) has argued,

A journey to one of these centers is a discovery of one’s identity in relation to the other world and to the community of believers—a ritual construction of self that not only integrates the believers but also places a symbolic boundary between them and “outsiders.” (p. 11)

The power of “traditional community” hence lies in its ability to provide a unified story in terms of chosen traumas or chosen glories—the nation how it used to be, as defined in absolute religious terms and “verified” through religious and historical textbooks.

*Connecting Nationalism and Religion to Hegemonic
Perceptions of Race and Gender*

To fully conceptualize the power of such “traditional communities,” it is important to be aware of how race and gender are at the heart of identity construction in relation to nationalist and religious discourse. The essentialist idea of the nation as constituting a relation between being and place hinges on the essentialization of being in terms of clear, distinctive definitions of who inhabits the national territory, who are “sons of the soil” and who are not. Racism, as Balibar (1991, pp. 37–38) has argued, is a historical phenomenon that emerges within the discourse of nationalism. Like nationalism, racism is based on separateness and the need for greater exclusivity.

Often such racism is disguised in political discourse as being simply a matter of religious and/or cultural differences. This is particularly prevalent in discourses

¹⁰ The attack on the twin towers, for instance, can be seen as an attack on a building symbolizing the antithesis of the values of Islam (seen in the eyes of the attackers), personifying the moral decay of the West with the United States as its main representative.

around immigration from the developing to the developed world. As argued by a far right-wing politician such as Jean-Marie Le Pen:

”Islam, which already represents the second religion in France, is opposed to any assimilation and threatens our own identity, our Western Christian civilization.” (quoted in van Dijk, 1997, p. 58)

Here, Le Pen adheres to a common tendency in modern racism: the propensity to focus on religion or culture instead of race. Differences between “them” and “us,” and the threat “they” constitute, are posed in terms of cultural religious characteristics found to be incompatible with “our” culture/nation. The recent tendency to link the religion of Islam with terrorist practices is a good example of how different groups become homogenized in religious and racist terms. Modern racism, or neo-racism (Volkan, 1997, p. 22), is thus not grounded in biology but in anthropology and in an ideological commitment to unchanging difference. In Western Europe the targets of this new phenomenon have tended to be guest workers and new immigrants from the Middle East, the former Yugoslavia, the South Asian subcontinent, and Africa.

Not only are nationalist and religious procedures intimately connected with race, however; gender is also at the root of much of this debate. The search for a proper “national character” is almost exclusively gender-based, concentrating on the male body and sharpening gender differences as a result. Of particular interest is how national stereotypes, such as the “clean-cut Englishman” or the “all-American boy,” have almost always been related to protection of the nation. The national stereotype represents those who protect the inside from outside aggressors at the same time as it separates out those who are different, making appearance a major differentiation (see Mosse, 1995, p. 168). Singling out men with Muslim names, clothing, or other physical features for particular scrutiny at international airports contains, for example, both a gendered and race-motivated nationalist stereotype. The assumption is, of course, that people inhabit only one nation and only one religion, that they are members of only one race, one gender, and one sexual orientation; that they, as Calhoun has phrased it (1997, p. 18), live in only one world at a time.

This idea of the nation as providing an inside is intimately connected to the idea of the family. It is associated with home, the place where the door will always be open for you, where a fire will be lit upon arrival and where you will receive the warmth of your mother’s care. Essentialist views of women, men, femininity, and masculinity are at the basis of such family metaphors and have served to institutionalize women’s as well as minorities’ inferiority. As Balibar (1991, p. 37) has pointed out, images of gender, race, and nation are never far apart. In this sense, family metaphors have served to assign others to the ranks of second-class citizens, with females and minorities often being denied any direct relation to national agency.

Such lack of agency is also evident in relationships between the colonizers and the colonized. As noted by Todorov (1982, pp. 35–38) in relation to the Indians of South America, the propensity to associate Indians with nature (the noble savage), thus denying them a possibility of having a will of their own, is similar to the common association of women with nature. Like the colonies, women need to be conquered, tamed, and cared for. The notion of “caring” is most recently illustrated by the hijacking of feminist terminology in the hands of the American president who bombed Afghanistan to free the “women of cover” and who then took on the cause of the Iraqi women (Viner, 2002). Considering that the same president on his first day in office cut the funding to any international family planning organization that offers abortion services or counseling, it is difficult to see these actions as anything other than a theft of feminist rhetoric for other purposes.

Family metaphors are not limited to nationalist discourse alone, however, but are also a significant part of much religious discourse. This is often expressed as a matter of controlling the body, especially sexual control. Among Christian and Islamic fundamentalists (Bayes & Tohidi, 2001; Beyer, 1994), the family is portrayed as the core social institution, and women serve as the maintainers of religion and tradition. Women come to represent the timeless quality of status quo, of tradition, in the name of religion. Examples range from the extremes of the Taliban to more modest family values-oriented discourse among religious believers in both Western and non-Western societies.

Race and gender are thus at the heart of identity construction in relation to nationalist and religious discourse. The fact that racism is a necessary element in the constitution of religious nationalism makes it a core feature for constructing the object-other. Both biological and cultural racism involve the stigmatization of otherness as manifest in practices of elimination, violence, intolerance, humiliation, and discrimination. The enemy-other must necessarily be debased and dehumanized, as it is only by making it into an object that hate can be sustained and chosen traumas created. For this to occur, however, gender must become as central as racism. By conceptualizing the “other” as weak, effeminate, and devoid of rational decision-making, nationalism and religion help in degrading the other and in taking away its status as a subject. This is particularly visible in the use of rape in conflicts and in war, where rape serves both as a signifier of the “other” (the woman) as a nonsubject and as a signifier of the other side as “powerless,” as they (the weak males) have failed to protect their women.

Hence, the strength of nationalism and religion as powerful identity-signifiers lies in their ability to convey unity, security, and inclusiveness in times of crisis. In conveying these beliefs they provide the idea of a “home,” a place where subjectivity can be anchored and securitized, giving both protection and safety from the stranger, the object-other. Nationalism and religion, relative to other identity constructions, thus involve a shift from the personal level to a more

abstract (imagined) level in their desire to go beyond the feeling of being more at home in one place than in another (see Calhoun, 1997). In this they extend further than the values and traditions of childhood formation, as they both change the focus from that of a subset of humanity to that of the whole.

Conclusion

The prominence of religion and nationalism, in novel interpretations, thus may engender the growth of new local identities in response to the destabilizing effects of globalization. It is at such times of “homelessness” and alienation that leaders may emerge to channel existential fears and feelings of loss and despair. The globalization of the local, or the global-local nexus, encourages resistance and rejection of traditional power structures (Haynes, 1999) as securitized subjectivity becomes the main priority among people who feel at a loss with their current social and economic situation. Rejecting one set of structures, however, means implementing a new or different set. The construction and reconstruction of historical symbols, myths, and chosen traumas supply alternative beliefs to everyday insecurity. The more inclusionary such beliefs are, the more exclusionary they tend to be for individuals or groups not included in the definition of these beliefs. The construction of self and other is therefore almost always a way to define superior and inferior beings. Superior are those on the inside (of the religion or nation) who represent purity, order, truth, beauty, good, and right (order), while those on the outside are affected by pollution, falsity, ugliness, bad, and wrong (chaos) (see Bauman in Featherstone, 1995, pp. 143–170). The inside (the home) can bring order from the chaotic outside.

My argument is that nationalism and religion supply particularly powerful stories and beliefs (discourses) through their ability to convey a picture of security, of a “home” safe from intruders. They do this by being portrayed as resting on solid ground, as being *true*, thus creating a sense that the world really is what it appears to be. The world, in this view, “really” consists of a direct primordial relationship to a certain territory (a “home”) and/or to a certain god(s). In this way nationalism and religion, as identity-signifiers, are likely to increase ontological security while minimizing existential anxiety.

The securitization of subjectivity is, however, always an intersubjective process, structurally as well as psychologically, which implies that an “other” is invariably involved in the process. Increasing ontological security for one person or group by means of nationalist and religious myths and traumas is thus likely to decrease security for those not included in the nationalist and/or religious discourse. The answer is not only to unmask those hidden power structures involved in the appeal to one and only one exclusionary identity, but also to recognize and deal with the real structural insecurities for many people as they must learn to cope in increasingly complex and globalized societies. Only by taking seriously

the emotional aspects of structural insecurities in response to globalization can we avoid essentialist, “civilizational” readings of global phenomena such as 9/11 and its aftermath.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank Ian Manners and three anonymous reviewers for their excellent suggestions. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Catarina Kinnvall, Department of Political Science, Lund University, Box 52, 221 00 Lund, Sweden. E-mail: catarina.kinnvall@svet.lu.se

REFERENCES

- Aggestam, K., & Kinnvall, C. (2002, July). *Constructing “facts” on the ground: Positivism and the (re)invention of myths*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, Berlin.
- Alam, J. (1999). *India: Living with modernity*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Appadurai, A. (1993). Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. In P. Williams & L. Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory* (pp. 324–339). London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Axtman, R. (1998). *Globalization and Europe*. London: Pinter.
- Ayubi, N. (1999). The politics of Islam in the Middle East with special reference to Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia. In J. Haynes (Ed.), *Religion, globalization and political culture in the Third World* (pp. 71–92). Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.
- Balibar, E. (1991). Racism and nationalism. In E. Balibar & I. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Race, nation, class: Ambiguous identities* (pp. 37–68). London: Verso.
- Barker, C. (1999). *Television, globalization and cultural identities*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2001). *Community: Seeking safety in an insecure world*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bayes, J., & Tohid, N. (Eds.) (2001). *Globalization, gender, and religion: The politics of women's rights in Catholic and Muslim contexts*. New York: Palgrave.
- Baylis, J., & Smith, S. (2002). *The globalization of politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Beyer, P. (1994). *Religion and globalization*. London: Sage.
- Bhattacharya, N. (1991). Myth, history and the politics of Ramjanmabumi. In S. Gopal (Ed.), *Anatomy of confrontation: Ayodhya and the rise of communal politics in India* (pp. 122–140). London: Zed.
- Bidwai, P., Mukhia, H., & Vanaik, A. (Eds.) (1996). *Religion, religiosity and communalism*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Billig, M. (1987). *Arguing and thinking: A rhetorical approach to social psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Billig, M., & Tajfel, H. (1973). Social categorization and similarity in intergroup behavior. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 3, 27–52.
- Bion, W. R. (1961). *Experience in groups*. London: Tavistock.
- Calhoun, C. (Ed.) (1994). *Social theory and the politics of identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Calhoun, C. (1997). *Nationalism*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Castles, S., & Davidson, A. (2000). *Citizenship and migration: Globalization and the politics of belonging*. New York: Routledge.

- Coningham, R., & Lewer, N. (2000). Archaeology and identity in South Asia: Interpretations and consequences. *Antiquity*, 74, 664–667.
- Craib, I. (1989). *Psychoanalysis and social theory: The limits of sociology*. London: Routledge.
- Craib, I. (1994). *The importance of disappointment*. London: Routledge.
- Deaux, K. (1996). Social identification. In E. T. Higgins & A. Kruglanski (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (pp. 777–798). New York: Guilford.
- Dupuis, A., & Thorns, D. C. (1998). Home, home ownership and the search for ontological security. *Sociological Review*, 46, 24–47.
- Erikson, E. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.
- Featherstone, M. (1995). *Undoing culture: Globalization, postmodernism and identity*. London: Sage.
- Flax, J. (1990). *Thinking fragments: Psychoanalysis, feminism & postmodernism in contemporary West*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge*. Brighton, UK: Harvester.
- Gergen, K. J. (2000). *An invitation to social construction*. London: Sage.
- Gibney, M. (2002). Liberal democratic states and responsibilities to refugees. *American Political Science Review*, 93, 169–181.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The nation state and violence*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Haddad, Y. Y., & Esposito, J. L. (Eds.) (1998). *Islam, gender and social change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, S. (Ed.) (1992). *Modernity and its futures*. London: Polity.
- Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Haynes, J. (1997). Religion, secularisation and politics: A postmodern conspectus. *Third World Quarterly*, 18, 705–728.
- Haynes, J. (Ed.) (1999). *Religion, globalization and political culture in the Third World*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.
- Held, D., & McGrew, A. (1999). *Global transformations*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Hirst, P., & Thompson, G. (1996). *Globalization in question*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hogg, M. (1992). *The social psychology of group cohesiveness: From attraction to social identity*. New York: New York University Press.
- Hogg, M., & Abrams, D. (1988). *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relationships and group processes*. New York: Routledge.
- Hoogvelt, A. (2001). *Globalization and the postcolonial world: The new political economy of development*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave.
- Huddy, L. (2001). From social to political identity: A critical examination of social identity theory. *Political Psychology*, 22, 127–156.
- Hurrell, A., & Woods, N. (Eds.) (1999). *Inequality, globalization, and world politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huysmans, J. (1998). Security! What do you mean? From concept to thick signifier. *European Journal of International Relations*, 4, 226–255.
- Jabri, V. (1996). *Discourses on analysis: Conflict analysis reconsidered*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Jenkins, R. (1996). *Social identity*. London: Routledge.
- Jurgensmeyer, M. (2000). *Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Kinnvall, C. (2002a). Analyzing the global-local nexus. In C. Kinnvall & K. Jönsson (Eds.), *Globalization and democratization in Asia: The construction of identity* (pp. 3–18). London: Routledge.
- Kinnvall, C. (2002b). Nationalism, religion and the search for chosen traumas: Comparing Sikh and Hindu identity construction. *Ethnicities*, 2, 79–106.
- Kinnvall, C. (2003). Identitetsstudier—en översikt (Identity studies—an overview). In B. Petersson & A. Robertson (Eds.), *Identitetsstudier i praktiken* (Identity studies in practice) (pp. 11–34). Malmö, Sweden: Liber.
- Kinnvall, C. (2004). Globalization, identity, and the search for chosen traumas. In K. Hoover (Ed.), *The future of identity: Centennial reflections on the legacy of Erik Erikson* (pp. 111–136). Lanham, MD: Lexington.
- Kinnvall, C. (in press). *Globalization and religious nationalism: Comparing Sikh and Hindu identity constructions in India*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Kolodner, E. (1995). The political economy of the rise and fall(?) of Hindu nationalism. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 25, 233–260.
- Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of horror: An essay of abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kristeva, J. (1991). *Strangers to ourselves*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kronsell, A. (2002). Homeless in academia: Homesteading as a strategy for change. In M. McCoy & J. Di Georgio-Lutz (Eds.), *A world of hegemonic masculinity. Women in higher education: Empowering change* (pp. 37–56). Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Lemert, C. (1994). Dark thoughts about the self. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Social theory and the politics of identity* (pp. 100–130). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Manners, I. (2000). Europe and the world: The impact of globalization. In R. Sakwa & A. Stevens (Eds.), *Contemporary Europe* (pp. 182–201). Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave.
- Mennell, S. (1994). The formation of we-images: A process theory. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Social theory and the politics of identity* (pp. 175–197). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Mol, H. (1976). *Identity and the sacred: A sketch for a new social-scientific theory of religion*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Monroe, K., Hankins, J., & Van Vechten, R. (2000). The psychological foundations of identity politics: A review of the literature. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 3, 419–447.
- Mosse, G. L. (1995). Racism and nationalism. *Nations and Nationalism*, 1, 163–173.
- Murer, J. S. (1999, July). *New approach to understanding nationalism and ethnic conflict: Adaptive cultural mourning*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, Amsterdam.
- Nandy, A. (1997). The twilight of certitudes: Secularism, Hindu nationalism, and other masks of deculturation. *Alternatives*, 22, 157–176.
- Norton, A. (1988). *Reflections on political identity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Oakes, P., Haslam, S. A., & Turner, J. (1994). *Stereotyping and social reality*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ogilvie, D. M., & Ashmore, R. D. (1991). Self-with-other representation as a unit of analysis in self-concept research. In R. Curtis (Ed.), *The relational self* (pp. 282–314). New York: Guilford.
- Ong, A. (1999). *Flexible citizenship—The cultural logics of transnationality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Parekh, B. (1995). Ethnocentricity of the nationalist discourse. *Nations and Nationalism*, 1, 25–52.
- Pathak, A. (1998). *Indian modernity: Contradictions, paradoxes, and possibilities*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House.
- Reicher, S., & Hopkins, N. (2001). *Self and nation*. London: Sage.
- Robertson, R. (1992). *Globalization, social theory and global culture*. London: Sage.
- Robins, R. S., & Post, J. M. (1997). *Political paranoia: The psychopolitics of hatred*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

- Scholte, J. A. (2000). *Globalization: A critical introduction*. Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.
- Scott, A. (Ed.) (1997). *The limits of globalization*. London: Routledge.
- Shotter, J. (1985). Social accountability and self specification. In K. Gergen & K. E. Davis (Eds.), *The social construction of the person*. New York: Springer Verlag.
- Sigel, R. (Ed.) (1989). *Political learning in adulthood*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, A. (2000). The sacred dimension of nationalism. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 29, 71–81.
- Sylvester, C. (1994). *Feminist theory and international relations in a postmodern era*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tajfel, H. (1970). Experiments in intergroup discrimination. *Scientific American*, 223 (5), 96–102.
- Tajfel, H. (1982). *Social identity and intergroup relations*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7–24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Thomas, S. (1999). Religion and international society. In J. Haynes (Ed.), *Religion, globalization and political culture in the Third World* (pp. 4–28). Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.
- Todorov, T. (1982). *The conquest of America*. New York: Harper.
- Torring, J. (1999). *New theories of discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Žizek*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Turner, J. (1994). Self and collective—Cognition and social context. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 20, 454–463.
- Turner, J., Hogg, M., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- van der Veer, P. (1996). *Religious nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- van Dijk, T. (1997). Political discourse and racism: Describing others in Western parliaments. In H. Riggins (Ed.), *The language and politics of exclusion: Others in discourse* (pp. 31–64). London: Sage.
- Viner, K. (2002, 21 September). Feminism as imperialism. *The Guardian*, p. 11.
- Vogler, C. (2000). Social identity and emotion: The meeting of psychoanalysis and sociology. *Sociological Review*, 48, 19–43.
- Volkan, V. (1988). *The need to have enemies and allies: From clinical practice to international relationships*. Northvale, NJ: Aronson.
- Volkan, V. (1997). *Bloodlines: From ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism*. Boulder, CO: Westview.