

## PREFACE

At the end of the cold war optimistic liberal internationalists persuaded themselves that the age of nationalism, which they associated with fascism and other extreme authoritarian doctrines, was over and that a new order, not so different from that envisaged by President Woodrow Wilson at Versailles in 1918, was about to emerge. It was to be based on a community of democratic states, linked together by tolerance and a commitment to uphold human rights and mutual economic interests.

They could not have been more wrong. Nationalism, the most incoherent but also by far the most powerful and widespread of the ideologies that throughout the twentieth century had battled to capture the soul of modern man, soon re-surfaced, in all its protean variety, to muddy the waters. Sometimes, as in the immediate aftermath of the break up of the Soviet Union, it seemed to provide evidence of the benign effects of respecting the principle of self-determination; in other cases such as the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, it demonstrated that it had lost none of its vicious and destructive potential. In one of the articles in this valuable collection, Professor Heraclides shows that the trajectory of separatist conflicts has been continuously upwards since 1945, peaking before the Millennium at over fifty.

The battle lines in the academic debate between modernists and so called perennialists about the origins and spread of nationalism were drawn up forty years ago, so that it sometimes seems that there is little more to be said about the subject. Yet, at a time when a conflict with deep and confusing national roots - the war between Russia and Ukraine - has caused huge human suffering on both sides, without a likely end in sight, it is increasingly clear that there is much that we still do not understand, about the phenomenon of nationalism itself, the continuing hold it has over human imagination, and what can be done, if not often to resolve the conflicts it gives rise to, at least to manage and contain them.

There are few better guides to navigating this minefield, than Professor Heraclides. He brings to the study of nations and nationalism meticulous scholarship, deep historical knowledge and a clear-headed understanding of the relation between international law and international politics. Above all his judgements are always carefully argued and sensible. This collection of his writings over the past three decades ranges widely - and with impressive authority - from the ethnic rivalries and conflicts of his own region, to the comparative study of separatist and secessionist conflicts across the world, and the associated topics of humanitarian and third party intervention. Its publication at a time when the world sometimes feels as it is sleep-walking into an Orwellian dystopia, it is greatly to be welcomed and deserves to be widely read.

*James Mayall*