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Cultural Diversity and the Resilience of Nations

Much nationalist scholarship has argued that nationalism is a homogenising force inventing new forms of solidarity with the aim of achieving independent state-hood. In my earlier work on nationalism, I argued there were often competing nationalist projects, focused on the nation as historical community that also recognised and celebrated diversities within nations as the basis of their vitality. Indeed, in many countries we see the existence of embedded differences that occasionally erupt into cultural wars. I examine here the origins and significance of cultural wars in the making and remaking of nation-states. I will argue that intense cleavages may arise out of

the experiences of wars, civil wars, colonisations and revolutions, that give rise to competing definitions of the nation and that once institutionalised take on a recurring character. In Russia, France, Greece, and Ireland such divisions can assume a religious vs secular opposition, but there are other bases of division. I assess the significance of these divisions suggesting that although they often result in social polarisation, they also articulate alternative options for populations as they experience the contingencies of the modern world.