**Nationalism**

The concept of nationalism is not new. Its origins lie in the creation of the French Nation State at the end of the eighteen century and was first used by the anti-Jacobin French Priest Augustin Barruel. But nationalist ideas were also prevalent in Latin America from the former Spanish colonies in the early nineteenth century (1). In Britain, the spread of nationalism gathered a particular momentum in the twentieth century, assuming two imperatives: 1) the urge for a stronger recognition of the Welsh and Scottish cultural identity, and 2) the separatist drive for independence in Eire in the first part of the twentieth century and in Scotland in the twenty first century.

The word ‘nation’ is derived from the Latin ‘*nasci*’, meaning ‘to be born’. Nationalism is therefore about a sense of belonging: of being born ‘into’ in community and sharing a group identity. It embraces a shared language, history, culture, religion and traditions. Observers identify four distinctive forms of nationalism. Firstly, the **‘primordial’ perspective** describes nationalism as an ancient ethno-cultural belief, based on the evolutionary human tendency to form groups based around their place of birth. Secondly, the **‘modernist’ perspective** describes nationalism as a legal-political entity that requires the structural conditions of modern society in order to occur. Thirdly, Geller proposed **constructivist nationalism**, which argues that nations are artificial constructs of elites and the political and national unit should be congruent. Finally, there is the **‘engaged theory’,** which is a fusion of these two perspectives: while recognising nationalism as a legal-political entity, it also proposes that much of nationalist thinking is based on the more subjective ‘primordial’ perspective.

With the emergence of the modern nation-state in eighteenth century France nationalism began to assume political significance. It assumes that the world can naturally be divided into nations and that nation-states are the most appropriate and efficient form of political organisation. ***J.S. Mill proposed that ‘the boundaries of government should coincide in the main with those of nationality’.*** The nineteenth century saw the rise of nationalism in Europe where smaller states were forged into new nations with distinctive national identities. This was true, for example, of Italy and Germany. The growth of nationalism was replicated throughout Latin America with nations such as Venezuela and Peru gaining independence from the Spanish Empire.

The spread of nationalism continued apace in the twentieth century. After the First World War new nations, such as Hungary and Poland were created, and in the mid-twentieth century far-right nationalism erupted in Italy and Germany. Towards the end of the century new nation-states emerged in Asia and Africa and separatist nationalist movements emerged in Europe in countries such as Yugoslavia, Spain and Britain.

**Core Themes:**

The Nation

Race & ethnicity

Self-determination & Sovereignty

Organic Society

Identity & exclusion

Patriotism

**Core Themes:**

**The Nation**

The ideas of nation and nationhood are central to nationalism, but what exactly do these ideas mean? The concept of ‘nation’ is difficult to define and the source of much confusion. It is often confused with patriotism (a pride in one’s country), race (a biological entity), and country (a geographical classification). The concept of a nation is influenced by several factors, including language, history, religion, culture and geography; but it is also subjective. It is a psycho-political entity: a sense of belonging based, to varying degrees, on some or all of these factors. It usually requires the subservience of citizens to the national project and it is also often transient: new nations emerge, others disappear (witness the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s). Some nations, for example Scotland, which seek recognition as an independent nation-state. Others, like Wales, seek only a distinctive cultural identity without full political-legal autonomy.  
 **Language** is important to nationhood. For example, part of what identifies someone whose nationality is French is the French language. The French nation comprises French-speaking people. But language is not alone the defining feature. Canadians, for example, speak English and French, but both English and French speaking Canadians equally regard themselves as citizens of the Canadian nation. There are similar examples in Belgium and Switzerland.  
 Similarly, **culture** is a key concept. This is particularly true, for example, of Welsh nationalism, where the preservation of the Welsh culture and language has been a central tenet in their argument. They have no desire for to achieve full political independence from the United Kingdom, but more a desire that the distinctive Welsh culture should be recognised and promoted in the principality. Similarly the Flemish Movement argues that there is a distinctive Flemish culture in the Belgian region of Flanders which deserves greater recognition in order to preserve the Dutch language and Flemish culture and history.   
 Culture helps create a sense of national belonging. It includes national symbols, music, foods and folk-heroes and is sometimes the root of stereotypical national images. In England, for example, there is St George, Shakespeare, the music of Elgar and Vaughan Williams, and Robin Hood; in Scotland there is Robbie Burns, ‘Auld Lang Syne’, haggis, and tartan (although much of what we now perceive to be part of the Scottish culture is a Victorian invention of Sir Walter Scott); and in Wales there is Owain Glundwr, St David’s day, and male voice choirs.  
 Some nations see their culture as superior to others, arguing theirs is a greater civilization. This was particularly true of Nazi Germany which claimed cultural superiority over other nations or races. The Aryan culture was seen as a civilizing culture, whereas Jews were portrayed as the destroyers of culture (see the chapter on Fascism above).  
 **History** and **culture** are often intertwined in defining a nature. Historical victories and figures are significant rallying calls. In Britain, for example, there is Nelson and Waterloo; in the USA there is George Washington and the American Revolution (or the War of Independence as it is known in Britain); and in India there is Ghandi and the independence struggles of the mid-1940s.  
 A sense of national unity can be cemented by a shared **religion**. In Pakistan, for example, there is a strong connection between national pride and Muslim heritage, and in Poland Catholicism has played an important part in forging a national identity with slogans such as *Polska Wielka Katolicka*, or ‘Great Catholic Poland’. In the summer of 2014 the radical fundamentalist Islamic group Isis tried to establish an Islamic nation southern Iraq and northern Syria, declaring the region a ‘caliphate’, ie, their territory is the rightful successor to the original Islamic state (see the chapter on Religious Fundamentalism below). However, religion can also divide a nation. In Northern Ireland, for example, the Unionist identity is strongly rooted in Protestantism, whereas the Republican stance is Catholic inspired (see the section on Northern Ireland below).  
 Nations are also often defined by **geography**. For example, Australian is an island nation very clearly defined by its geographical boundaries. Similarly, Japan is an archipelago defined by its geography. In the late nineteenth century the nation of Germany was forged by smaller states in central Europe and in the 1930s under Hitler Germany sought to expand its geographical borders, while in Italy Mussolini had ambitions on expansion into North Africa. However, geography may not always be significant. Kurds, for example, are distributed widely across North Africa and southern Asia and before the creation of Israel Jews were scattered across Europe and Asia.  
 **Race and ethnicity**: In **ethnic nationalism** particularly, the physiological bonds of race and ethnicity are especially significant. Nazi Germany placed great importance on race to the exclusion of most other national attributes, believing that the Germanic people were the direct descendants of an Aryan race that once ruled central Europe. Similarly Bosnian Serbs introduced the horrific concept of ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the 1990s, committing genocide against Bosnian Croats (who also engaged in ‘ethnic cleansing’) and Muslims. Current nations based on ethnicity include Malaysia, Greece and Israel, even though there are significant minority groups within their countries. Race and ethnicity are often bound with other key characteristics, such as language and culture. However, some nation-states espouse **civic nationalism** which allows all who wish to sign up to the nation’s values to join, regardless of race and ethnicity. This was true of the more volunturistic nature of Mussolini’s Italy and is certainly true of the United States of America which regards itself as the ‘melting pot’ of immigration and has traditionally opened its borders to all who are willing to sign up to the ‘American Dream’.

**Self-determination & national sovereignty**

The idea of national sovereignty emerged at the time of the French Revolution when, for the first time, nations were no longer ruled by absolute monarchs but by the popular will of the people (the ‘general will’ that Rousseau proposed). National sovereignty presumes the right of citizens to consent to an *independent* national government which governs on behalf of the national community and which provides for the common defence of the people. Not all nations seek self-determination and national sovereignty. We have already seen that Welsh nationalism is not fuelled by such objectives. It is also possible that independent nation states may relinquish some of their sovereignty in order participate in international or supranational organisations, such as the European Union, or to fulfil the terms of treaties. The issue of handing-over some national sovereignty to organisations like the EU is challenged by conservative nationalist movements (see below). In the United Kingdom, UKIP campaigns against the erosion of UK sovereignty.   
 Most nationalists would claim that self-determination, the creation of an autonomous nation-state, is a priority within nationalist thinking. This is the highest and most appropriate form of political organisation. The creation of Israel gave self-determination to an independent Jewish nation in 1948. Throughout history, it has been achieved through two means. Firstly, it has been realised through *unification*, as in the case of Germany in the nineteenth century and again in 1990, when East and West Germany were unified into one nation-state. Secondly, it has been achieved through *separatism*, as was the case with Pakistan in the Partition of India in 1947. In the early twenty first century Scotland is seeking independence from the United Kingdom and, in Spain, the Basque separatists are seeking independence from the Spanish state.

**Organic Society**

The idea of an organic society proposes that a community bound together by a shared history, culture and language is much stronger than a society based on selfish individualism. The unity that such ‘oneness’ creates, based on ethnicity, kinship and emotional ties, instils a powerful sense of belonging and of loyalty to the national community. This was exemplified in Mussolini’s Italy and in the concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community) in Nazi Germany (see the chapter on Fascism above). Such a view accords with the *primordial* perspective more than the *modernist* view of nationalism.

**Identity and exclusion**

Nationalism engenders a sense of identity and exclusion in its followers. This may be based on (often romanticised) culture, as with Welsh nationalism (which seeks to preserve the Welsh language and culture), or on ethnicity and kinship, as with nationalist sentiment in countries such as Greece, or on perceptions of ‘race’, such as in Nazi Germany. Such ‘inclusiveness’ pre-supposes the ‘exclusion’ of certain groups: a situation where there is a homogenous national group (‘us’) and outsiders (‘them’). At its most extreme, non-Aryans were excluded from citizenship in Nazi Germany and an Apartheid system ran in South Africa from 1948 until 1994, denying black South Africans to democratic representation and equality of opportunity.

**Patriotism**

A devotion to, and pride in, one’s country is clearly associated with nationalism. Patriotism provides an emotive appeal to nationalism, facilitating both unity and sacrifice. However, patriotism is more about pride in civic institutions and traditions and is not always concordant with nationalist beliefs. It does accord with the *civic* definition of nationalism as this requires a loyalty to the key institutions of the nation state (monarchy, the government, the legal system). However, the *republican* definition of patriotism rejects these time-served institutions in favour of a new nation-state, as was apparent during the French Revolution.

**Key thinkers**

**Johann Gottfried von Herder** (1744 - 1803) is a philosopher associated with the German Romantic Movement and *Sturm und Drang*, the latter being a movement which focussed on the importance of culture and language. He proposed that culture was passed between generations through language and that language and culture were the ties that bind a nation. He attached particular significance to nationality and patriotism and urged Germans to take pride in their language (a radical message at the time) before the nation of Germany had properly been forged.

***Fascinating fact:***

Herder argued that the Jews should not receive full citizenship in Germany, but that the world owed a debt to the Jews because of the abuse they had suffered over the centuries and that this debt could be discharged only by helping the Jewish people to establish political sovereignty in their ancient homeland of Israel.

**Giuseppe Mazzini** (1805 – 1872) was an Italian nationalist who believed in the romantic notion that nationalism was built on comradeship and that national self-determination would bring about lasting peace. A liberal republican, he believed that nationalism, based on dominant cultural communities, would bring about social progress and that repressive states should be brought down by small, secret revolutionary groups. He inspired Garibaldi’s project to unify Italy and nationalist movements in South America. He formed the secret organisation ‘Young Italy’ to advance the idea of a united Italy, but also sought the spread of nationalist ideas across Europe.

***Fascinating fact:***

Mazzini was nicknamed ‘the Beating Heart of Italy’ for his influence on Italian nationalism.

**Charles de Gaulle** (1890-1970) was a French nationalist who became president of France between 1959 and 1969 and who pursued policies that unashamedly promoted the self-interest of France. During the Second World War de Gaulle had fled occupied France to London to become self-proclaimed leader of the Free French Forces and leader of a French government in exile. In 1947 he founded his own political party *Rassemblement du Peuple Francais* (RPF), *the Rally of the French People.* As president, he rewrote the French constitution, brought in the fifth republic and seized sweeping powers. His political ideology, ***Gaullism***, asserted that France was a major international power and should not rely on other countries, particularly the United States, for its defence or economic prosperity. Withdrawing France from NATO, de Gaulle oversaw the development of French nuclear weapons. He twice vetoed UK membership of the European Economic Community (now the EU). He also supported independence for the French speaking parts of Canada. He once said: *"Patriotism is when love of your own people comes first; nationalism, when hate for people other than your own comes first."*

**Strands of Nationalism**

Nationalism is a complex political phenomenon with contradiction and ambiguity between the different stands. Each nationalist movement inevitably promotes its own unique brand, a rival to other brands. Below are some of the key schools of nationalist thought.

**Liberal nationalism** This is the oldest form of nationalism, dating back to the French revolution, recognisably the first of the modern nation-states. Prior to the birth of liberal nationalism loyalty to the state was defined by allegiance to a monarch. Liberal nationalism changed this belief. At its heart is a belief that nations are moral entities which provide rights and responsibilities for their citizens. It views citizens as individual members of a nation, brought together by a common bond, whose collective will is implemented by the state. For Mazzini, often regarded as the founding father of nationalism, the dominant culture of a region was the bedrock of a nation and that popular sovereignty could be established by democratic means in republican states.  
 Liberal nationalism suggests that the world can be divided into self-determining nations based on culture and that this is the most effective form of political organisation. It opposes both foreign oppression by imperialism or multinational corporations and promotes constitutionalism and representation to validate self-determination. Such self-determination is also seen as key to creating international peace. It was a view shared by the American president Woodrow Wilson, and one which informed the creation of Europe nation-states at the Paris Peace Conference after the First World War. Mazzini believed that peace could be achieved by allowing citizens to form nations based on culture.   
 The critics of Mazzini’s view that nationalism can promote international harmony say it is too naive and too optimistic. They point to the fact that there are wider, more emotional and sometimes darker forces which are often at work within nationalist sentiment. History, ethnicity and race can all play a part, and it has not proved easy to determine nation states purely on the basis of Mazzini’s model. The division of Europe after the First World War established the nation of Yugoslavia, for example, though subsequent events proved that ethnic tensions within the region undermined the unity of this nation. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, religious divides have created tensions within Northern Ireland.

**Conservative Nationalism** Conservative nationalism arose in the nineteenth century from a desire to preserve the nation-state and defend traditional institutions, advocating self-determination. In the UK it found its most popular expression in the Conservative Party, and more recently, in the Party’s antipathy towards the supranational European Union. This was particularly evident in the emergence of Thatcherism in the nineteen seventies and eighties, which saw the rise of Euroscepticism within the party and the promotion of national pride, particularly after the Falklands War.   
 Conservative nationalism views the society as organic and was evident in One Nation Conservatism. This transcends class divide, by promoting a wider national identity and a sense of paternalism in the ruling elite (see the chapter on Conservatism). This, in turn, avoids social unrest and masks social divisions by creating a cohesive national appeal, an approach used skilfully by Charles De Gaulle in France in the 1960s . Moreover, Conservative nationalism tends to espouse the notion of what Johann Herder (1744-1803) called a *Voltgeist*, a national spirit . Often nostalgic and harking back to a glorious past, Conservative nationalism is often wary of immigration, which it perceives as threatening or diluting national identity. This is true, for example, of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP).

**Nationalism and imperialism** In the nineteenth century nationalism often found expression in imperialist expansion and militarism. **Expansionist nationalism** saw European nations seeking to build empires across the globe in order to further their national prestige. This was apparent in many European countries, including Britain. In the twentieth century it was further evident in Japan, Germany and Italy prior to WW2.

**Post-colonial nationalism** Imperialism in turn produced a twentieth century response, particularly from African countries, in the form of **anti-colonial and postcolonial nationalism**. This sought the self-determination of countries once ruled under imperialistic expansion, much of it Marxist in tone. It was also apparent in Mao’s China and Castro’s Cuba. In Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union, some newly-emergent states, such as Romania, Croatia and Serbia, exhibited **ethnic nationalism**, which asserts that nations are defined by a common heritage, language and faith, and share a blood kinship. However, not all states exhibiting ethnic nationalism have emerged from imperial domination. For example, other European countries, notably Greece, Italy and Germany, have also displayed forms of ethnic nationalism.

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