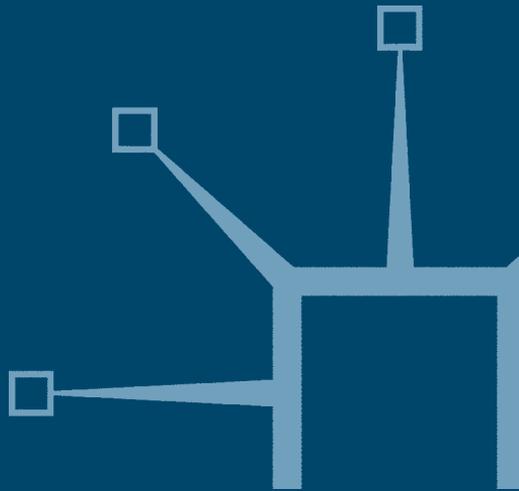# Rethinking Nationalism

A Critical Introduction

Jonathan Hearn

Rethinking Nationalism

Also by Jonathan Hearn

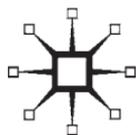**Claiming Scotland: National Identity and Liberal Culture**

Rethinking Nationalism

A Critical Introduction

Jonathan Hearn

Hear my prayer, O Lord,
And give ear to my cry;
Do not be silent at my tears;
For I am a stranger with You,
A sojourner, as all my fathers were.
Remove Your gaze from me,
that I may regain strength,
Before I go away and am no more.

Psalm 39: 12–13

To the memory of
Elinor Joy Scott Hearn

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

List of Figures

List of Boxes

Preface and Acknowledgements

This book aims to provide a critical introduction to the core literature in nationalism studies. It evolved out of my experiences teaching the subject of nationalism to undergraduates and postgraduates at the University of Edinburgh, and researching nationalism and national identity in Scotland. Like nationalism studies in general, it is interdisciplinary, drawing especially on the fields of sociology, politics, anthropology and history. Intellectually, having been trained in anthropology but having taught for several years in the areas of sociology and politics, I have become something of a 'man without a country'. Nonetheless, writing this book has brought home to me how that anthropological training has shaped my interdisciplinary perspective, including my interests in long-term social evolution, in social organization, and in how we conceptualize culture.

The book is about the phenomenon of nationalism but it explores it primarily through a selection of major influential texts on that subject, rather than through a direct consideration of cases. For that reason I regard it as a critical survey of concepts by means of which various thinkers have tried to understand nationalism. It is about nationalism, and the conceptual tools we use to grasp it. I do not advance a 'theory of nationalism', and share in the view of many specialists in the field that a single unified theory of nationalism is probably not possible. Instead my concern has been to grasp the general perspectives or approaches that have guided research, and to scrutinize the way key concepts have been formulated. My own point of view becomes apparent over the course of the book, but this is more a way of looking at nationalism, than a theory of nationalism. I hasten to add that while I think this kind of 'conceptual house cleaning' is necessary, and a good way to get an overview of a difficult subject, there can be no substitute for becoming familiar with, and conversant in, actual empirical case studies. To any student I would say that thinking critically about theories and concepts ultimately requires developing a feel for the complexity and particularity of real world instances of what is being theorized. There is no substitute for this, and it is the best way we have of checking aimless theoretical abstraction.

The contemporary literature on nationalism tends to get divided into

two main perspectives (again, I am reluctant to call them theories), namely 'primordialism' and 'modernism'. The first half of the book overviews and engages with these approaches. Anthony Smith, a leading figure in nationalism studies, frequently maintains that the modernist approach, of which he is highly critical, is the dominant approach (1998). While this may be true among established scholars of nationalism, it has been my experience as one who teaches the subject that most people who come to it for the first time lean more towards a primordialist perspective. Moreover, popular discussions in the media often seem to uncritically invoke primordialist assumptions. Thus I have chosen to begin with primordialism in this book, because I think that is where most people begin at a common-sense level. My own perspective, however, while attempting to find merit in both approaches, leans decidedly towards modernism.

I have come to the opinion that the two most fundamental concepts one must grapple with, and that will have fundamental consequences for how one understands nationalism, are power and culture. For that reason the second half of the book explores the main ways those concepts have been handled in the literature, and argues for particular ways of conceiving them. The structure of the book is somewhat unusual, in that the internal chapters (2–9) come in pairs, the first one of each pair is expository, surveying major works under that heading while keeping critical engagements to a minimum, the second of the pair being critical and exploratory. Thus:

2 Primordialism	3 Rethinking Primordialism
4 Modernism	5 Rethinking Modernism
6 Power	7 Rethinking Power
8 Culture	9 Rethinking Culture

There is a certain affinity between the themes of primordialism and culture on the one hand, and those of modernism and power on the other. So in a sense the book returns to where it began, but in a way that problematizes the culture concept and its relationship to primordialism. The book's structure means that those newer to the subject, if more interested in a survey of the literature, can concentrate on the even-numbered chapters (which include case study 'boxes' to help flesh out the theories being discussed), while those more familiar with the subject may chose to concentrate on the more critical engagements in the odd-numbered chapters. This design is an attempt to 'practice what I preach'. I always tell students to respect the work of those they disagree with and try to

understand it on its own terms as thoroughly as possible before engaging in critique. I've tried my best to take my own advice, reviewing literatures as sympathetically as I can, before raising my doubts and advancing my own perspective. One can never fully transcend one's own prejudices, but by organizing the book in this way I have tried to make the distinction between what others have said, and what I am saying, as clear as possible.

A single book can only cover so much ground without losing focus. There are three important areas of the literature on nationalism that I have thus chosen to largely leave aside. First, there is a more practical or applied literature that tries to imagine the best political, legal and constitutional means for dealing with national, ethnic and cultural diversity and conflicts, both within and between states. Second, there are normative debates in political theory and philosophy, about whether nationalism is a good thing or a bad thing, whether it has inherent affinities with either liberalism or ethnic chauvinism, whether it should be supported or opposed. And third, there are postmodern approaches that regard nationalisms primarily as socially constructed discourses and practices, and tend to view any treatment of them as relatively objective realities with suspicion. My primary purpose in this book is to offer a synthetic, descriptive understanding of nationalism, not to offer solutions to the problems it generates, to pass judgement on it, or to question its reality. Nonetheless I offer brief discussions of these 'roads not taken' in the Conclusion to provide a sense of other directions that the reader might want to explore.

Finally, there are many thanks to be made. I would like to thank all the students I have taught over the years in the MSc in Nationalism Studies at Edinburgh. The approach of this book and many of its ideas have been explored with them in lectures and seminars, and I have benefited from their engagements, both sympathetic and critical. My colleagues at the School of Social and Political Studies have provided a stimulating and supportive intellectual environment. I have gained much from my conversations with James Kennedy and David McCrone, who also generously read and commented on a full draft of the book. The book was also improved by helpful comments from Palgrave Macmillan's anonymous reviewer. My publisher Steven Kennedy gave me good advice as well, and was very patient and supportive as the demands of new empirical research, and the more pressing project of starting a family, slowed down the journey from book proposal to manuscript. In addition to her critical eye, Gale Macleod gave me understanding and emotional support throughout, lifting me when I became dispirited. Iskra, who was born about the time the book was conceived, and Lovel, who was born as the

manuscript was being completed, have brought me great happiness. All three have helped me keep things in perspective, by filling my days with love.

<div align="right">JONATHAN HEARN</div>

This page intentionally left blank

1

Introduction: Knowing Nationalism

Before delving into more specific perspectives and approaches, we need to appreciate the fundamental difficulties involved in defining nationalism and formulating core concepts to guide our investigations of it. Sensitizing us to these difficulties is the main objective of this introduction.

Perplexing Variety

How do we know when we are looking at an instance of nationalism? Consider the examples from the recent past in Box 1.1.

Which, if any, of these diverse episodes best exemplifies nationalism? Some readers may only regard some of these examples as clear instances of nationalism, and each one can, of course, be viewed through other conceptual lenses – constitutional reform, regime collapse, ethnic politics, international *realpolitik*. They are not offered as any sort of easy demonstration of what nationalism is, but to sensitize us to the diversity and complexity of the processes we routinely attach to this term, and the likelihood of misunderstanding and miscommunication on this topic. Their causes and contexts are highly varied – shifting distributions of governance in an evolving Europe, a weakened state following the collapse of the USSR, inter-ethnic conflict on a small island with a restricted economy and a global super-power asserting its international strength in a domestic atmosphere of insecurity. No doubt in each case there are elites and factions vying to mobilize popular support around particular agendas, and complex combinations of calculated interests, collective sentiments and evocative symbols shaping the course of events. And specifying how these play out in each case is fundamental to explaining them. But these are the stuff of politics and society in general, and not peculiar to nationalism. So what is it that makes us look at examples like these and so often think: 'nationalism'?

Box 1.1 Exemplifying Nationalism

Example 1: On 11 September, 1997, the people of Scotland voted in a referendum, by a strong majority, to establish a Scottish parliament with legislative authority over much of Scotland's domestic affairs. The new parliament was officially opened on 1 July 1999. This was the outcome of decades of building political pressure for greater self-government in Scotland, and Britain-wide pressures for constitutional reform. Some supporters are content with this new arrangement, others would like to see the parliament's range of powers increase, and still others would like to see Scotland become an independent nation-state, while retaining membership in the European Union.

Example 2: In February 1998 Slobodan Milosevic, President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, sent Serbian troops into parts of Kosovo controlled by the Kosovo Liberation Army, triggering brutal guerrilla warfare, urban riots and abortive peace negotiations. On 24 March NATO launched a campaign of air bombardment that lasted for 78 days, finally achieving an agreement to the withdrawal of Serb troops on 9 June. These events arose out of Milosevic's rescinding of the provincial autonomy of Kosovo in 1989, the general disintegration of the Yugoslavian state after 1991 and the Bosnian War of 1992–5, with its 'ethnic cleansing' in the Serbian parts of Bosnia. At the time of writing all that remains of Yugoslavia is the loose federation of Serbia and Montenegro.

Example 3: In May 2000 Fijian businessman George Speight led a small private army in a coup, seizing control of the Fijian parliament. He

➔

When we focus on the more abstract language of theories and generalization it is easy to lose sight of the messy reality we seek to understand. To help offset this tendency, throughout this book in the even-numbered expository chapters I have offered case study boxes to illustrate some of the issues under discussion. It is in the nature of concrete examples, however, that they can exemplify many different themes at once, and at the same time they highlight general issues in idiosyncratic ways. Some cases are included because they are paradigmatic for the literature (e.g. Czech nationalism in nineteenth-century Bohemia), others because they are likely to be less familiar and perhaps counterintuitive (e.g. spirit mediums mediating territorial attachments in the insurgency that transformed Rhodesia into Zimbabwe in the 1970s). Thus some examples are meant to help strengthen the reader's familiarity with cases that have strongly influenced the literature, while others are meant to tease the mind a bit in relation to the discussions they are located in. But most fundamentally

→
sought to remove the Indian-descended Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudry, and called for a new constitution guaranteeing the political supremacy of indigenous Fijians. After holding the Prime Minister and his cabinet hostage for 56 days, Speight and his army surrendered, ushering in a period of martial law. This was the third coup d'état since 1987 led by indigenous Fijians (around 50 per cent of the population) in response to perceived political domination by Indo-Fijians (around 44 per cent of the population). Descended from indentured labourers brought to Fiji under British colonial rule in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Indo-Fijians today dominate the economic sector, while the military is controlled by the indigenous Fijians.

Example 4: Between 20 March and 15 April 2003, after failed attempts to get full UN backing and strong resistance from France and Russia, a 'coalition of the willing', led by the US with its main partner the UK, waged a war against Iraq, toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein**.** The war was justified on various grounds: that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and was prepared to put them into the hands of terrorists, posing an imminent threat to the US and the UK; that Hussein had flaunted UN resolutions calling him to disarm for over a decade and had to be brought to heel; and that he was a brutal tyrant and deposing him was a humanitarian act, liberating the Iraqi people. More broadly, the war arose out of the Al Qaeda terrorist attacks on the US on 11 September 2001, which triggered a US policy of heightened national security and an international 'war on terrorism', in the first instance on Al Qaeda and their Taliban allies in Afghanistan.

they should keep reminding us of the perplexing variety that lies beneath the conceptual abstractions. I have also tried to achieve a reasonable amount of global and historical scope overall in the examples chosen.

Competing Definitions

If we survey a few examples of how the nation and nationality have been defined by major commentators, the results are just as diverse. One established approach to these questions is to begin with the assumption that 'nationalism' is what 'nations' do. In a famous essay of 1882 the French rationalist scholar Ernest Renan defined the nation broadly as a combination of social solidarity built up out of historical contingencies, with a voluntary collective will in the present to continue to build on that solidarity:

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which strictly speaking are just one, constitute this spiritual principle. One is in the past, the other in the present. One is the common possession of a rich legacy of memories; the other is actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to continue to value the heritage that has been received in common. (Renan 1996: 57–8)

In the 1950s, strongly influenced by the developing field of cybernetics, the political scientist Karl Deutsch emphasized the frequency and density of social communication, a theme that continues to be central to many conceptions of nationalism (e.g. Anderson 1991):

What is proposed here, in short, is a functional definition of nationality. Membership in a people essentially consists in wide complementarity of social communication. It consists in the ability to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large group, than with outsiders. This overall result can be achieved by a variety of functionally equivalent arrangements. (Deutsch 1953: 97)

Yet another key theme, prevalent in many popular (as well as scholarly) definitions, has been to stress notions of ancestry, kinship and descent. The nation is an imagined extension of bonds of blood relationship:

Our answer, then, to that often asked question, 'What is a nation?' is that it is a group of people who feel that they are ancestrally related. It is the largest group that can command a person's loyalty because of felt kinship ties. . . . The sense of unique descent, of course, need not, and *in nearly all* cases *will not*, accord with factual history. (Connor 1994: 202, emphasis in original)

And again, in a line of thought running from Emile Durkheim (1965 [1915]), through Carlton Hayes (1960), up to Benedict Anderson (1991: 5–6), the parallels between nationalism and religion have often been noted, many seeing the national community as a modern replacement for religious community, supplying a criteria for ultimate good and a focus for social solidarity. As Josep Llobera puts it:

The nation, as a culturally defined community, is the highest symbolic value of modernity; it has been endowed with a quasi-sacred character

equalled only by religion. In fact, this quasi-sacred character derives from religion. In practice, the nation has become either the modern, secular substitute of religion or its most powerful ally. In modern times the communal sentiments generated by the nation are highly regarded and sought after as the basis for group loyalty. As a symbolic value, the nation is the stake of complex ideological struggles in which different groups participate. That the modern state is often the benefi- ciary should hardly be surprising given its paramount power. (Llobera 1994: ix–x)

And recently, in the face of highly negative conceptions of nations and nationalism as malign forces inevitably leading to chauvinism, social conflict and violence (e.g. Hobsbawm 1996), some have tried to articu- late more philosophical justifications for why nations may be necessary and even beneficial:

Consider what is involved in a set of people forming a team. When we describe a group of people in this way, we imply that they work or play in close proximity to one another. But we also imply more than this: we imply that they see themselves as co-operating to achieve some end, that they regard one another as having obligations to the team. These two parts of the definition can pull apart. For instance, we might say 'The England cricket team isn't really a team at all; they're just a bunch of individuals . . . We can imagine two partici- pants arguing about such a claim, one seeing individualism where the other sees co-operation, and we could see that it would not be easy to decide who is right . . . Nations are like teams in this respect.' (Miller 1995:17–18)

So which is it? Is the nation a historically formed community, an artefact of communicative interaction, an imagined macro-family, a pseudo-religion, a team? While not absolutely incompatible, these vari- ous definitions point us in different directions, and each seems to work better in some cases than others. We will attempt a 'working definition' of nationalism towards the end of this introduction. For now what we need to appreciate is that our definitions do not so much delimit the subject matter as direct our attention towards specific aspects of a complex phenomena that has proved very difficult to encapsulate in a few words.

Underlying Assumptions

Most of us bring fundamental assumptions about what kind of thing nationalism is to our studies of nationalism, assumptions that shape from the outset our attempts at more formal definitions. We need to be aware of our own prejudices in this regard, because they have a powerful affect on how we read – what we find appealing and unappealing, convincing and unconvincing. The usual starting points are:

Nationalism is a feeling: At bottom, nationalism is made of passions, emotions and sentiments. It arises out of the subjective experiences of those who consider themselves nationalists, and patterns of sympathy among those with similar feelings. For this reason it is ultimately irrational or at least non-rational (Mill 1996; Connor 1994; Grosby 1995).

Nationalism is an identity: It is a way of categorizing oneself and others, which fulfils a fundamental human need for such labelling. While the social divisions and attendant labels of nationalism may be viewed as socially and historically contingent, the need to anchor the self in relation to others is a necessity (McCrone 1998; Penrose 1995; Reicher and Hopkins 2001).

Nationalism is an ideology: It is a particular system of morally charged beliefs about the world, which sees the world as naturally made up of discrete nations, each with a natural right to self-determination. This ideology can seize the minds of key thinkers and spread to entire populations, creating a worldview that directs collective behaviour (see Kedourie 1993 [1960]; Greenfeld 1992; Smith 1991: 74).

Nationalism is a social movement: Feelings, identities and ideas can be amorphous and elusive, their social effects difficult to demonstrate. Better to look for actual behaviour, social action in the name of the nation, people organizing themselves on a substantial scale to achieve nationalist goals. Only by tying it to observable behaviour can we give the concept reliable meaning (see Breuilly 1993; Hroch 2000; Hechter 2000).

Nationalism is a historical process: While usually encompassing the previous premises, which are all undoubtedly historical processes, by this we mean something broader – the tendency to view nationalism as a world historical trend, which has localized beginnings, most would agree in Europe, but which spreads to encompass the globe. In the guises of ideology, social movement and historical process, nationalism is closely

identified with modernization in general. The key point with this last, however, is that nationalism is seen somewhat coolly, as a process that can be described with some detachment, and that objectively exists apart from the sentiments and convictions of actual nationalists (see Kohn 1967; Gellner 1983; Mann 1992).

My own position is that nationalism can be all of these things at once – feeling, identity, idea, movement and process – though certain cases, and approaches to research, will tend to direct our attention to some aspects more than others. And in practice most students of nationalism observe this catholicity of understanding, despite tending to anchor themselves in one of these broad conceptions. What I want to suggest here at the outset is that we should not let our biases towards one of these conceptions impede our ability to grapple with the ideas of those who see it differently.

Primordialism versus Modernism

Since the 1970s students of nationalism have increasingly been viewed as falling into two great camps: primordialists versus modernists (Özkirimli 2000; Smith 1996a, 1996b; Gellner 1996a). Surveying these approaches and assessing their strengths and weaknesses is the main purpose of the first half of this book. Briefly, primordialists tend to view nationalism as a variant of ethnicity, often emphasizing its emotional dimension, and arguing that many modern nations have evolved continuously out of premodern ethnic formations. Modernists, on the other hand, tend to see nations as concomitants of the formation of modern states and economies, often emphasizing their ideological dimension and seeing them as evidence of the plastic and socially constructed nature of ethnicity.

While this dichotomy encodes some very real and fundamental differences in the conception and understanding of nationalism, it has also become a somewhat sterile framework for making sense of nationalism. What once fruitfully stimulated debate and forced people to articulate their arguments has increasingly become a pair of entrenched, ritually opposed positions, which many would now like to move beyond (e.g. Nairn 1997). Among other things, I will be arguing in the chapters that follow that although primordialist approaches pay salutary attention to the role of feelings in nationalism, the social nature of feelings is frequently under-theorized, and too easily attributed to the power of symbols. On the other hand, modernist approaches, while rightly drawing

attention to the historical specificity of nationalism, have a misleading tendency to represent modernity as a relatively stable state, failing to appreciate the accelerating dynamism of modernity, which continues to generate new nationalisms.

Ethnicity and the State

The concept of ethnicity tends to become unhelpfully blurred with those of culture and nationalism. I would define ethnicity as the process generating relatively bounded, self-identified groups, defined in relation to similar groups, usually through notions of common descent and practices of endogamy, and often occupying a distinctive economic or ecological niche (see Eriksen 1993: ch. 1). The crucial ideas here are, first, that there is more to an ethnic group than common social traits such as language variety, religion, skin colour, customs and so on. Indeed an ethnic group might be quite diverse in terms of such traits, or share such traits with other distinct ethnic groups. What matters is that the group regards itself as a unique population, with a name for itself, some sense of collective history and ways of symbolically marking membership in the group. Second, ethnic groups by definition come in contrastive sets, the notion of 'us' is defined in contrast to other such groups, to 'them' (Barth 1969).

Thomas Eriksen usefully lists some of the typical headings under which we encounter ethnic groups: (1) urban ethnic minorities, where processes of immigration in search of work have brought people of different origins together in the same urban space; (2) ethnic groups in 'plural societies', usually colonially created states in which pre-existing ethnic diversity and labour immigration combine to create an ethnically segmented citizenry; (3) indigenous peoples, whose identities have been embedded and maintained within nation-states (sometimes called 'first nations'); and (4) proto-nations, groups usually arising out of 2 or 3 above, and politically organized to actively pursue nation-statehood (1993: 13–14). Such groups are shaped by inter-ethnic competition and cooperation, which in turn is conditioned by the number of groups interacting in any given setting, and their relative sizes and strength. Typically ethnic identity is sharpened by competition between groups for advantages within a specific urban and/or state context, or by having their distinctiveness institutionalized by state structures, and/or by resistance to the state and dominant ethnic groups. The crucial point to make here at the outset is that the pursuit of equal representation and rights by ethnic groups within a given political system is ethnic politics, not nationalism.

Only when such groups make claims to jurisdiction, to some degree of self-government in a given territory, have we entered the realm of nationalism. Ethnic groups that are strongly embedded in urban contexts and relatively detached from homelands of origin, have little ability to engage in nationalism in that urban context, although they may be able to influence nationalisms in their distant homelands (Anderson 1998: ch. 3).

Related to but distinct from the opposition between primordialism and modernism, is a general tension in nationalism studies between those who assimilate the concept of the nation to that of ethnicity (Smith 1986) and those who assimilate it to that of the state (Breuilly 1993). Either nations and nationalism are a particular kind of ethnicity, or they are ideologies that necessarily accompany the state (especially the modern state). If we encountered a debate among meteorologists, one side arguing that thunderstorms are caused by masses of cold air, the other by masses of warm air, we would surmise that both sides had fundamentally misconstrued the process in question, failing to understand that thunderstorms are caused by the encounters between masses of colder and warmer air. Broadly speaking, I argue that nations and nationalism are more usefully thought of as arising precisely out of the interactions of ethnicity-making and state-making processes, as, in an important sense, 'neither here nor there'.

A word on terminology is in order here. The point has often been made that if by 'nation-state' we mean the congruence of a single ethnicity with a single state, then these are rare creatures indeed (see Connor 1978). However, there is a convention of using this term more loosely to label powerful modern states that claim to bind the allegiance of their citizens through a shared identity, often styled as national, notwithstanding underlying ethnic or national diversity in their populations. When I use the term in this book, it is in this latter, putative sense that it is intended. Nation-states are those that subscribe to this dominant idea, which should not be taken as an adequate description of their social composition.

Power and Culture

My own perspective, developed in the second half of the book, is that the study of nationalism necessarily relies heavily on concepts of power and culture, and thus how we conceive of these will fundamentally affect our understandings of nationalism. Few would deny this although, as we will see, some place more emphasis on the one and some on the other. There is a tendency, however, for those who emphasize power to define

nationalism primarily in terms of the pursuit of state power, and the ideo-logical power of the state to generate social identities and political alle-giance. While agreeing with the importance of this dimension, I think we need to conceive of power as something that permeates social relations and forms of social organization, not just as something locked up in the state and that emanates from it. Thus understanding nationalism is often a matter of grasping how the power inherent in less manifestly political forms of social organization – ethnic groups and associations, religious communities and institutions, speech communities, urbanism, gender relations – articulate with the powers of the state and provide the neces-sary infrastructures for challenging and pursuing state power. In saying this I am not trying to be novel, but rather to move to the fore an aspect of nationalism that is too often taken for granted. To do this I will try to bring some general theories about the nature of social power to bear on nationalism studies.

Culture, on the other hand, has a tendency to be disassociated from, or even opposed to power. Here I make two arguments. First, to the degree that we define culture in ideational terms, as a system of ideas, attitudes and values embodied in symbols and myths, we need to appreciate the difficulty of distinguishing between culture and ideology, in other words ideas bound up with the making and unmaking of power. In fact, the distinction is probably a hazardous one, and we should always look for the political charge in the mental representations that suffuse national-ism. Second, and here I will draw particularly on the history of how culture has been conceptualized in the discipline of anthropology, I argue that there is another, often forgotten sense of the term culture, that should be restored. In this second sense, culture is not a set of ideational *contents* – symbols, myths, values and so on – but rather a pattern of *relations* among all kinds of social phenomena, ideational, but also emotional, institutional, organizational, material, which makes them appear to 'hang together' (Deutsch 1953: 88).

It is the influence of centres of power, created through myriad forms of social organization, which patterns relations among social phenomena such that they appear to hang together through their common orientations to power. Thus culture, especially in this second sense, far from being opposed to power, is a conceptual guide to the perception and analysis of power and its workings. The point of view I have just sketched and will elaborate later on, with its interdependent conceptions of power and culture, is obviously a general one, which I would advocate for all social enquiry, not just the investigation of nationalism. But because national-ism is such a complex and pervasive aspect of our times, and we regularly

invoke notions of power and culture in wrestling with it, I think it is valuable to try to work through what we mean by power, culture and nationalism, together. Whether or not readers find this perspective appealing, it should provide a way of directing attention to fundamental issues, and of interrogating some of the conceptual assumptions of nationalism studies.

A Working Definition

I have suggested that defining nationalism is a particularly problematic task. Nonetheless, I'm obliged in a book like this to offer some sort of working definition, a general guide to what I have in mind when I talk about nationalism. Let me offer a relatively short definition, to be followed by some elaboration and qualification:

> Nationalism is the making of combined claims, on behalf of a population, to *identity*, to *jurisdiction* and to *territory*.

This definition, while not reducing nationalism to a political ideology, nonetheless stresses that at its core it involves the assertion of social claims, and that these claims are normally articulated and advanced by smaller social groups in the name of a larger population, which may or may not follow. Three particular kinds of claims are specified. The first, to *identity*, is not just to a common name or label shared with the rest of the national group, but to substantive content that characterizes the group. This claim may include such 'cultural' factors as religious beliefs or language, or notions of shared biological substance, or of inherited historical experiences, but it can also invoke more abstract qualities such as core values (e.g. egalitarianism, liberty, democracy). The kinds of content that make up the claimed identity can be quite variable. The second claim, to *jurisdiction*, asserts entitlement to power and the authority to make and enforce laws, although this may be claimed only to a degree, within a larger political system. Frequently this aspect of nationalism's claims is specified with the terms 'self-government' or 'sovereignty'. I choose the less common term jurisdiction because it tends to direct our attention to the goal of translating aspects of identity into laws, and the fact that laws, to be real, must be in force 'somewhere'. This takes us to the third claim, to *territory*, which normally concerns lands that at least some of the national group occupies, but can also concern lands from which the group has been wholly displaced. Usually when we think about nationalism, the issue

of territory is problematic, because the territory claimed is embedded within a larger territory that is otherwise claimed, and/or divided between the jurisdictions of separate states. The crux however is that there needs to be a real place where jurisdiction can secure identity. Thus in some forms of nationalisms, such as the official nationalisms of well-established states, the issue of territorial claims is not problematic, and only implicit, and thus nationalism reveals itself primarily through the other two claims. To be nationalism, these three kinds of claims have to come together as a package, and be viewed as interdependent by those who make these claims.

In discussions of nationalism, it becomes almost unavoidable that one moves back and forth between fairly narrow senses of the term such as the one above, and a much broader sense of nationalism as an epochal social process shaping modern world history. It is usually clear from the context which sense is meant, and I use the term in both senses in this book. The definition above is meant to help us decide what to designate as nationalism when we look around the world today. But it is somewhat historically under-specified. Something like these three combined claims can be found around the globe throughout much of human history (a point I would expect the committed primordialist to seize upon!). To specify nationalism in the fully modern sense, we need to say something about how these claims are *legitimated* and how they are *communicated*. Modern nationalism seeks broad popular support, casting political leaders as the agents of a collective will of the people. Large, complex political systems have always had to take some account of the sentiments and opinions of those at the base of the social hierarchy, but the processes of expressing consent to leaders was generally enchained, such that any support at the bottom for power at the top was heavily mediated through intervening layers of authority and consent. Modern politics is dominated by the idea that power at the top gets its legitimacy directly from the base, whether through democratic elections, or attendance at mass public rallies. Such processes of mobilizing popular support and gaining consent are greatly facilitated by means of mass communication. The expansion of literacy and the printed word, beginning about 500 years ago, and more recently the development of electronic media have extended, intensified and accelerated communications between the base and the top of the social hierarchy. Without such technologies it is difficult for the full-fledged claim-making process of nationalism to get off the ground.

I have chosen to define nationalism in the first instance, rather than nations. I would avoid the hyperbolic position that nationalism always

comes first, making nations where none existed (Gellner 1983) – the relationship between the two is more dialectical than this suggests. But it is collective social action, rather than its effects, that should be our starting point. Finally, the social world is too complex and messy to ever be adequately contained by such working definitions. These can at best guide our enquiries. If some cases appear marginal, falling neither clearly inside nor outside our definition, then recognizing that may itself be useful for understanding such cases.

Historical Orientation

There is a fairly conventional historical narrative about the rise and spread of nationalism that informs most academic discussions, and what follows is a schematic account of that narrative, more chronology than history. It is not offered as gospel truth, but simply as a synopsis of how the story routinely gets told, highlighting some of the major historical reference points, to help readers contextualize some of the discussions in this book. Most writers on the subject are either taking for granted, or arguing for or against, a story of unfolding forms of nationalism that goes something like this.

Forerunners and Preconditions

Glimmers of precocious nationalism have sometimes been discerned in the societies of the circum-Mediterranean world in the first millennium BC, particularly in the religiously integrated but politically marginalized Israelites, in the semi-democratic city-states of Greece and in the early Roman republic. However, in keeping with the modernist view, most have regarded these as at best distant relatives, seeing nations and nationalism as such as outcomes of long-term social transformations in Europe beginning around the fourteenth century.

Two processes are usually thought of as laying some of the groundwork for modern nationalism. First, the Renaissance (c. the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries) saw the rediscovery and revival of the classical art, literature and learning of the ancient Greco-Roman world. A new style of humanist thought, concerned with the study of human affairs rather than theological debate, developed in the Italian city-states and spread throughout Europe. A crucial aspect of this period was the recovery of classical republican and democratic ideas, and their reapplication in the early modern context. Second, the Reformation (sixteenth century), stimulated

Â A frequently expressed criticism of cosmopolitanism by liberal nationalist theorists is that its moral universalism is incompatible with national identity and patriotic obligations, defined as obligations to the nation and to fellow nationals. Rethinking Nationalism. A Critical Introduction. Author(s)Â This is an innovative and interdisciplinary introduction to the study of nationalism. The author uses paired chapters, first to present the work of key authors in relation to each of a set of key themes - primordialism, Show More. This is an innovative and interdisciplinary introduction to the study of nationalism.