

# Frustrated Nationalism in the Twenty-First Century

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## Introduction

A modern nation “is a population that purportedly has a right to a state of its own.”<sup>1</sup> Philip Roeder points out that “a piece of folk wisdom often repeated in academic and policy communities” suggests that today there “may be as many as six to eight hundred active nation-state projects, and another seven to eight thousand potential projects,” yet only a few more than 190 nation-states have achieved the status of sovereignty.<sup>2</sup> Here the term “nation-state project” refers to an instance in which a specific population claims it should be self-governing within a sovereign state of its own, although that self-governing territory may not yet exist.<sup>3</sup>

Nationalism, it has been said, has been “one of the determining forces in modern history.”<sup>4</sup> An understanding of the implications of nationalism for modern history and for our time appears to be a fundamental one. Ernest Gellner has written that nationalism “is primarily a political principle,” one “which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent,”<sup>5</sup> although Anthony Smith has defined nationalism as “an ideological movement for the attainment and maintenance of autonomy, cohesion and individuality for a social group deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation.” Smith emphasizes, therefore, that nationalism “is both an ideology and a movement, usually a minority one, which aspires

to nationhood for the chosen group.”<sup>6</sup> Nationalism has many forms, and it behooves us to understand its demands in order to understand the possible impact of nationalism today. As noted elsewhere, “on all continents there are competing projects to unite some states into larger states, such as a European Union . . . [or] to make others smaller by granting independence to such substate entities as the Basque Country or Somaliland.”

Nationalism is a state of mind in which the supreme loyalty of the individual is felt to be due the nation-state. A deep attachment to one’s native soil, to local traditions, and to established territorial authority has existed in varying strength throughout history. But not until the end of the eighteenth century did nationalism in the modern sense become a generally recognized sentiment increasingly molding all public and private life.<sup>7</sup>

Conflicts in the name of nationalism are unfortunately common and have been sources of social tension within and between nations for as long as individuals have been writing. Conflicts based on “national consciousness” and “patriotism” have long been with us.<sup>8</sup> In modern times social scientists have been more analytical about nationalism-inspired conflicts, trying to measure the factors that inspire them.<sup>9</sup> These are the issues addressed in this volume.

Many people use the word “nation” to signify a place, or a people, or a set of institutions. As commonly employed today, the term “nation” has two distinct meanings. The first refers to a country with a sovereign government. The second refers to a community of people, typically with a shared language, religion, culture, and territory. A related term, “nationality,” also refers to a community of people with a shared language, religion, and culture, but not necessarily a fixed territory.

“Nation,” of course, is a problematic term because of the “often-encountered failure in the vast literature of nationalism to find clearer distinctions between nationalism, nations, the nation-state, and national unity,” as well as a divide between “those who view the nation as a political association and those who see it as a cultural community.”<sup>10</sup> Not all nations correspond with their own nation-states, and many nation-states include more than one nation.<sup>11</sup> Fred Riggs of the University of Hawaii, working under the auspices of the International Social Science Council’s Committee on Conceptual and Terminological Analysis, has defined a nation as “a group of people who feel themselves to be a community bound together by ties of history, culture, and common ancestry.”<sup>12</sup> Although “nation” is used independently of “state” and “ethnic group,” sometimes these terms overlap and provide compound nouns such as “ethnic nation,” “social nation,” or “official nation.”

As Anthony Smith has noted, nationalism “provides perhaps the most compelling identity myth in the modern world.” Myths of national identity typically refer to territory or ancestry (or both) as the basis of political community, and these differences furnish important, if often neglected, sources of instability and conflict in many parts of the world. It is no accident that many of the most bitter and protracted “inter-national” conflicts derive from competing claims and conceptions of national identity. An understanding of these ideas and claims is vital if we are ever to ameliorate, let alone resolve, some of these conflicts and create a genuine international community.<sup>13</sup>

Smith has suggested that a number of conditions can foster the formation of powerful nationalist movements, as identified in Table 1.1, although he notes that some of these can be more vital than others. His view is that bureaucratic authority, the myth of common history, and a historical outlook “appear to be prerequisites for an effective nationalism.”<sup>14</sup>

One of the most widely cited modern analyses of the distinction between “nation” and “state” was offered by Hannah Arendt. She sought to understand the idea of “statelessness,” perhaps because of her personal challenges as a German Jewish refugee in the Second World War. She distinguished between nations and states. A *nation* referred to a dominant group “with its culture, language, and shared history living in a bounded territory,” whereas a *state* referred to “the legal status of persons living in a territory, that is those who are considered citizens with legal rights.” Arendt

Table 1.1. Conditions Fostering the Formation of Nationalist Movements

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I. Frameworks

1. An easily identifiable territory and location
2. A single political authority and bureaucracy, able to level and homogenize the population

II. Bases

1. A myth and cult of common origins and history
2. Other cultural differences like language or color
3. Partial secularization of urban elites’ traditions

III. Bearers

1. Growth and exclusion of an urban intelligentsia
  2. An alliance between intelligentsia and one or more classes or status groups, usually urban
  3. Commercial penetration and mercantile ascent
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Source: Based on Anthony Smith, *Nationalist Movements* (1976, 915).

argues that a tension between “nation” and “state” has persisted since the late eighteenth century, suggesting that a special problem exists for people who are “denationalized,” which was the fate of German Jews before the “final solution” of extermination was developed.<sup>15</sup>

In 1908, Friedrich Meinecke offered a distinction between the *Kulturnation* and the *Staatsnation*, the former referring to a largely passive cultural community and the latter referring to an active, self-determining political nation. Although many have indicated some unhappiness at basing nationalism upon a cultural dimension, this is an important distinction: cultural identities can and do exist without a corresponding national label. This means, then, that a “national” label must include some cultural dimension. As Smith has argued, “a political community . . . implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community.”<sup>16</sup> Smith has suggested five key characteristics of what he believes are included in a Western conception of the nation:

1. Nations have an historic territory, or homeland.
2. Nations have common myths and historical memories.
3. Nations possess a common, mass public culture.
4. Nations offer common legal rights and duties for all members.
5. Nations have a common economy with territorial mobility for members.

Thus a nation is defined as “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.”<sup>17</sup>

According to Max Weber’s famous definition, “a state is that human community which (successfully) lays claim to the *monopoly of legitimate physical violence* within a certain territory . . . [T]he state is a relationship of *rule (Herrschaft)* by human beings over other human beings, and one that rests on the legitimate use of violence (that is, violence that is held to be legitimate).”<sup>18</sup>

Thus to make fully explicit the nature of today’s common confusion, some self-perceived nations are not states (e.g. today’s Québécois living in Canada); some self-perceived states are not nations (e.g., the former Russian empire, or the former Yugoslavia); and relatively few contemporary states are “pure” nation-states (e.g., Iceland).<sup>19</sup>

One challenge in this discussion is that there is more than one type of nationalism. As Jaakko Heiskanen has written: “[N]ationalism may manifest itself as part of official state ideology or as a popular non-state movement and may be expressed along civic, ethnic, cultural, language, religious, or ideological lines.<sup>20</sup> These self-definitions of the nation are used to classify types of nationalism. However, such categories are not mutually exclusive and many nationalist movements combine some or all of these elements to varying degrees.<sup>21</sup> Nationalist movements can also be classified by other criteria, such as scale and location.”<sup>22</sup> In Smith’s view, “nationhood” comprises three basic ideals: (1) autonomy and self-government for the group; (2) solidarity and fraternity of the group in a recognized territory of “home”; and (3) a distinctive and preferably unique culture and history peculiar to the group in question.<sup>23</sup>

### The Ethics of Nation-building

Nationalism, as one scholar has noted, “is a confusing historical phenomenon.”<sup>24</sup> It is “confusing” because observers of nationalist movements may or may not support nationalism *in principle*, independent of the specific case being discussed. Several of the chapters included in this book discuss nationalist movements that have strong emotional linkages for their observers. The Houthi in Yemen range from being seen as terrorists supported by outside agitators to being seen as saviors of local culture, religion, and society. Although Charles De Gaulle voiced his support for Québec in his “vive le Québec libre” speech in July of 1967 while giving a speech at the *Expo '67 World's Fair*, especially with his emphasis on the word “libre” (free), many Canadians saw Québec nationalism as a distinct threat to the nation, and Canadian Prime Minister Lester Pearson responded by saying that “Canadians do not need to be liberated.”<sup>25</sup>

As Baum notes, some observers think of nationalism as a political movement associated with fascism, coming from history’s experience with the actions of Nazi Germany and Italy and Japan in World War II, but at the same time, some observers have a great deal of sympathy for anti-imperialist nationalism of former colonies in Asia and Africa that have struggled—some successfully, others unsuccessfully—to become independent states.<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to judge a nationalist movement from the outside, but it is often also difficult to evaluate it from the inside, to completely understand its goals and motivations. Many nationalist groups have “official” doctrines

and goals that appear to be laudable, but in fact have some subtext that is not so laudable. That is, we must be cautious when we look at nationalist movements to try to determine which are “good” and which are not. For many Canadians, the concept of nationalism was a good thing when it was being used to create Canadian institutions and culture and work toward independence from Britain, but it was not a good thing when Québec tried to use the same arguments to work toward independence from the rest of Canada.

Nationalism can be seen as both an ideology and a form of behavior. As an ideology, it is built on people’s awareness of a nation “to give a set of attitudes and programme of action.” As a form of behavior, it is linked to ethnocentrism and sometimes “shows itself in prejudice relating to foreigners, stereotyping of other nations, and solidarity with co-nationals.”<sup>27</sup>

### Nation-Building and National Sovereignty

*Nation-building*, relatedly, thus refers to the development and strengthening of a set of shared values and a common identity among the inhabitants of a country with a sovereign government. Some have referred to this kind of activity as “the production of conceptions of peoplehood. Sometimes, the peoplehood conceived by a particular nationalist ideology requires an independent state or autonomous territory for its realization.”<sup>28</sup> This common identity and these common values promote the development of legitimate state institutions. When people have problems agreeing on a national identity, domestic unrest and even civil war may follow. Similarly, *state-building* refers to the creation and strengthening of the civil and military institutions that make up a government.

It is not only the existence (or lack thereof) of “nationhood” that is the focus of this collection of essays. National *sovereignty* is the subject of most of the essays here. Sovereignty, in brief, is the quality or state of being sovereign, of having supreme power or authority. Groups want to be able to control their own futures, within their own territories, and sovereignty in these instances means that the group will control territory with recognized and stable boundaries, that the group will have the ability to enter into relations with other sovereign states and govern foreign and domestic trade, that the group will be able to live there on an ongoing basis, and that the group will have the ability to regulate policy that affects that group.<sup>29</sup> No other set of actors will be able to set or regulate such policy. These tensions

are exacerbated if the rulers of a political unit belong to a nation other than that of the majority of the ruled. In Gellner's words, "nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy" in which "ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones, and, in particular, that ethnic boundaries within a given state . . . should not separate the power-holders from the rest."<sup>30</sup> In strictly legal terms, sovereignty describes the power of a state to govern itself and its subjects. Sovereignty is a concept that a state has the right and power to govern itself without outside interference; the state is free from external control.<sup>31</sup>

This type of debate over *national sovereignty* has a long and—from the perspective of those who have unsuccessfully sought such a condition—sad history. The unsuccessful side in a quest for national sovereignty often suffers dramatically at the hands of the group that is dominant and in power, as we shall see in many of the essays in this volume. Those *in* control often do not want to accede to the requests of nationalist movements because that would mean *giving up* control of some of the territory they control.

## Nationhood and Ethnic Identity

Fox argues that "distinguishing between nationalisms, ethnicity, and racial identities has always been difficult because the categories are too loose." He argues that "an ethnic identity may easily become an ethnic nationalism; a nationalism that has failed to achieve an independent state may continue as an ethnic identity. Scottish and Welsh identities have moved back and forth over this range several times in the last century."<sup>32</sup>

It is the case, however, that ethnicity has been a basis for nationalistic motivations over time. Smith points out that the "standard, Western model of the nation" has been based on historic territory, legal-political community, legal-political equality of members, and common civic culture and ideology, but that "a rather different model of the nation" emerged outside of Western Europe, "notably in Eastern Europe and Asia," and could be called "an 'ethnic' conception of the nation."<sup>33</sup> The key characteristic of this was that whereas the Western concept laid down that an individual had to belong to some nation but could choose to which he or she belonged, the non-Western or ethnic concept allowed no such latitude. Whether you stayed in your

community or emigrated to another, you remained ineluctably, organically, a member of the community of your birth and were forever stamped by it. A nation, in other words, was first and foremost a community of common descent.<sup>34</sup>

Many of the nations and national movements described in this volume correspond well to this latter approach to the definition of a nation: they are based on ethnic identity, and even with an absence of a defining territory they endure.

Smith identifies six attributes of ethnic community that are crucial to a national identity, including (a) a collective proper name, (b) a myth of common ancestry, (c) shared historical memories, (d) one or more differentiating elements of common culture, (e) an association with a specific “homeland,” and (f) a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population.<sup>35</sup>

### Sources of New Nations

Indeed, according to one study, decolonization is the single greatest source of new nations. One study has found that 62 percent of the total number of new states since 1815 come from this source.<sup>36</sup> Table 1.2 shows the sources of new and reconstructed nations between 1816 and 2000.

Table 1.2. Where Do States Come From?

Origin of state	Examples	Major States	Micro States	Total
Division of states	Argentina, 1816; Romania, 1878; Russia, 1991, North/South Korea, 1948	159	21	180
Unification of existing states	Germany, 1990; Vietnam, 1975	5		5
Newly incorporated territories	Liberia, 1847	6		6
Total		170	21	191

*Source:* Table derived from data in Roeder, Table 1.1, “Numbers of New and Reconstituted States Worldwide, 1816–2000” (Roeder 2007, 8).



One of the classic arguments among historians is whether nations can exist before nationalism. Many would argue that *nations* have existed from time immemorial, and that nationalism is a much more modern phenomenon, often being dated to the French Revolution. Indeed, Kamenka suggests that “the history of Europe since the French Revolution has been the history of the rise and development of political nationalism. . . . Nationalism not only holds together the histories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries . . . it has also brought the histories of Asia, Africa and the Pacific into relation with European history, making them part of a universal history.”<sup>37</sup>

Before the period leading up to the French Revolution, we have only fleeting expressions of a national sentiment, and vague intimations of the central ideas of nationalism, with its emphasis on the autonomy of culturally distinctive nations. Even the nation is a purely modern construct, though here there is considerable disagreement among “modernists” as to the period of its emergence in Europe, with some favoring the eighteenth century or earlier and others backing the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when the masses were finally “nationalized” and women enfranchised.<sup>38</sup>

Kamenka argues that nationalism “is a modern and initially a European phenomenon, best understood in relation to the developments that produced, and were symbolized by, the French Revolution of 1797.”<sup>39</sup>

It is not enough, however, to say that “Asian nationalism” is simply a reaction to Western power and dominance, or that there was no idea of nation or national consciousness in Asia before conflict developed with the West.

Some of these peoples had also achieved national consciousness before modern times, most notably the Koreans sandwiched between the Chinese and the Japanese, the Vietnamese in their attitudes toward China, and the Burmans and the Thais in their attitudes toward each other. We can also include the Japanese in their attitudes toward Korea and China, the Chinese during the Sung and Ming dynasties in their attitudes toward the Mongols and various Manchurian military federations, and, less convincingly, various peoples living on the periphery of the Indian heartland, such as the Bengalis, the Tamils, and the Singhalese.<sup>40</sup>

While the British led the way to Western supremacy in Asia, followed by the Dutch and the French, the Asian response tended to be futile efforts at armed resistance in order to defend traditional rights and traditional dynasties, rather than to establish modern nation-states. It was only later that the “modern” concept of nationhood was established in Asia and Asian nationalist movements appeared

## Disputed Nations

The issue of being “free from external control” is a challenge to which many groups are very sensitive. The Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives<sup>41</sup> has a substantial collection of data sets that focus on topics of national identity and national conflict. How ethnic minorities are counted in national surveys is important and can influence the kinds of results that surveys will produce.<sup>42</sup> It is the case, of course, that not *every* ethnic minority can have its own nation-state in which it is “free from external control.” Such a situation would result in thousands of members in the United Nations, not nearly two hundred, as is the case today. The challenge, though, is to find a balance point where *significant* ethnic minorities become, in fact, majorities in their own nations, and no longer must live as minorities being ruled by other ethnic, religious, cultural, or some other majority group.

The challenge has always been deciding what the bases of nationalism should be. Language isn’t a good option, as there often is “no inevitable or natural correspondence between language and territory in the claims of aspiring nationality groups.”<sup>43</sup> Ethnic identities often spill over borders. Religion has been similarly inaccurate.

Of all the collective identities in which human beings share today, national identity is perhaps the most fundamental and inclusive. Not only has *nationalism*, the ideological movement, penetrated every corner of the globe, but the world is divided, first and foremost, into nation-states—states claiming to be nations—and national identity ever underpins the recurrent drive for popular sovereignty and democracy, as well as the exclusive tyranny that it sometimes breeds. Other types of collective identity—class, gender, race, religion—may overlap or combine with national identity, but they rarely succeed in undermining its hold, though they may influence its direction.<sup>44</sup>

According to the World Population Review, a sovereign nation is “a nation that has one centralized government that has the power to govern a specific geographic area. Under the definition set by international law, a sovereign nation has a defined territory with just one government. These nations have a permanent population and can enter into relations with other sovereign countries. While most major sovereign nations are well known throughout the world, many smaller or less prominent nations are relatively *unknown countries*.”<sup>45</sup> The number of sovereign nations in the world today is not agreed upon. The United Nations currently recognizes 206 states—193 member nations, two observer states, and eleven “other” states—but there are a large number of other regions that are considered sovereign nations by

Table 1.3. 15 United Nations States Whose Sovereignty Is Disputed

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1. **Abkhazia**—is claimed by Georgia.
  2. **Artsakh**—is claimed by Azerbaijan.
  3. **China** (the People’s Republic of China)—is partially unrecognized and is claimed by Taiwan (the Republic of China).
  4. **Cyprus** (Republic of Cyprus)—is not recognized by Turkey.
  5. **Israel**—is partially unrecognized. As of December 2019, 162 UN nations have recognized Israel as a sovereign nation [the United Nations currently has 193 members].
  6. **Kosovo**—is claimed by Serbia. As of March 2020, 115 UN nations have recognized Kosovo as a sovereign state. However, some have also retracted or declined to confirm their recognition due to political pressure.
  7. **North Korea** (The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea)—is claimed by South Korea.
  8. **Northern Cyprus** (Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus)—is claimed by the Cyprus (Republic of Cyprus).
  9. **Palestine**—is partially recognized and is disputed by Israel. As of 2019, 138 UN nations have recognized Palestine as a sovereign state.
  10. **Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic**—is claimed by Morocco.
  11. **Somaliland**—is claimed by Somalia.
  12. **South Korea** (The Republic of Korea)—is claimed by North Korea.
  13. **South Ossetia**—is claimed by Georgia.
  14. **Taiwan** (Republic of China)—is claimed by mainland China (the People’s Republic of China). As of 2019, only fourteen UN nations have recognized Taiwan as a sovereign nation, largely due to China’s interference.
  15. **Transnistria**—is claimed by Moldova.
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*Source:* World Population Review, “Sovereign Nation 2022.” <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/sovereign-nation>

some sources and not by others. Of the United Nations’ 206 states, fifteen have disputed sovereignty.

Sovereignty expresses the fundamentally important notion of political independence. In this sense, sovereignty is an exercise of power by a state.

Peter Calvert has written that “one of the first tasks of most governments, when they have won independence, is to take it away from someone else . . . I would refer to them generally as ‘minorities.’”<sup>46</sup> The goal of seeking power, after all, is to control power, and power invariably tends to be exercised *over others*. Calvert notes that “the vast majority of independent states which have achieved their independence through force tend to fall into the hands of those who will seek to make them as ‘oppositionless’ as possible.”<sup>47</sup>

Are there sovereign states with no minorities to become the “other” in the exercise of power by the state? Not likely. When a new state is created based on a significant variable, such as religion or ethnic identity, citizens may look around and find that everyone is alike in the key variable. However, in short order, other variables will likely appear to create a social chasm, whether those variables are social characteristics, income, education, language, geography, or something else. This leads to what Calvert refers to as the *reductio ad absurdum* of a nationalist movement being victorious, leading to independence, and subsequently growing *its own* nationalist movements within its population that will seek to win *their own* independence.<sup>48</sup>

Plamenatz has suggested that nationalism “is a reaction of peoples who feel culturally at a disadvantage . . . Where there are several peoples in close contact with one another and yet conscious of their separateness, and these peoples share the same ideals and the same conception of progress, and some of them are, or feel themselves to be, less well placed than others to achieve these ideals and make progress, nationalism is apt to flourish.”<sup>49</sup>

## The Era of the Nation-State

The key to nationalism is the nation-state.<sup>50</sup> While not all nationalist groups *have* a nation-state, the nation-state is almost invariably the *goal* of nationalist movements. As the Pew Research Center has noted,

Even as the world grows more comfortable with globalization, people continue to feel the strong pull of nationalism. This enduring sense of national identity is seen in a number of ways. There is a widespread belief among people in most nations that their culture is superior to others and that it needs protection from outside forces. Significant numbers of people assert that parts of neighboring countries rightfully belong to their country. And most would like to tighten controls on the flow of immigrants into their countries.<sup>51</sup>

Some have said that the era of the nation-state has come and gone, and that the challenge to state sovereignty comes from the inability of modern states to deal with multinational organizations and behaviors, including ethno-political conflict, multinational corporations, global terrorism, and other structures that do not recognize the sovereignty of contemporary nation-states.<sup>52</sup> Globalization may be the functional opponent of the nation-state, as multinational corporations and foreign direct investments undermine the practical dimensions of state sovereignty; states have proven to be incapable of protecting their citizens from external forces such as these. Similarly, the growing force of what are seen as universal human rights can also be seen to weaken state sovereignty.<sup>53</sup>

The study of nationalism in international relations is confusing because of the confounding of all of these terms. It is confusing because “it deals at times with *states* and at other times with *nations*, *nationalities* and *ethnic groups*, none of which are states.”<sup>54</sup> Others, though, maintain that neither nationalism nor ethnicity is vanishing as part of “an obsolete traditional order.” Craig Calhoun has argued that

Both are part of a modern set of categorical identities invoked by elites and other participants in political and social struggles. . . . Numerous dimensions of modern social and cultural change, notably state building (along with war and colonialism), individualism, and the integration of large-scale webs of indirect relationships also serve to make both nationalism and ethnicity salient. Nationalism, in particular, remains the pre-eminent rhetoric for attempts to demarcate political communities, claim rights of self-determination and legitimate role by reference to “the people” of a country. Ethnic solidarities and identities are claimed most often where groups do not seek “national” autonomy but rather a recognition internal to or cross-cutting national or state boundaries.<sup>55</sup>

## Nationalism and Conflict

Debate over nationalism has long been associated with war and intergroup violence. Woodrow Wilson once described World War I as having “its roots in the disregard of the rights of small nations and of nationalities,” and he argued that future peace would have to rely on “the wishes, the natural connections, the racial aspirations, the security and the peace of mind of the

peoples involved.” His view was that out of World War I would emerge “a new international order based upon broad and universal principles of right and justice,” including “self-determination,” which was intimately tied in with national aspirations.<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, the peacemakers at the end of World War I saw the role of the nation as being central to the idea of peace in the future. Lloyd George wrote in March of 1919 that nationality was a guiding principle of future peace “because of its status as a ‘human criterion.’”

There will never . . . be peace in South-Eastern Europe if every little state now coming into being is to have a large Magyar *irredenta* within its borders. I would therefore take as a guiding principle of the peace that as far as is humanly possible the different races should be allocated to their motherlands, and that this human criterion should have preference over considerations of strategy or economics or communications, which can usually be adjusted by other means.<sup>57</sup>

“Conventional wisdom” will tell us that nationalism is dangerous, and that while nationalism is a relatively modern phenomenon it has already made its mark in the history of violent conflict. While Napoleon and Hitler are often cited in discussions of the dysfunction of nationalism, more modern examples of civil wars fought for that end—the Algerians against the French, the Biafrans against the Nigerians, Basques against Spaniards, Tibetans against Chinese, and so on—are easy to come by. David Laitin disagrees with this conventional wisdom, naming four routes that can lead ethnic and national groups to violence: (1) irredentism, (2) secession, (3) “sons-of-the-soil,” and (4) communalism.<sup>58</sup>

Irredentism (“unredeemed” in Italian) exists when a nation has a state of its own but wants to also take back territory occupied by fellow nationals living in a neighboring state. Secession can be characterized as the inverse of irredentism: “when a nation is not larger but rather smaller than the state, and its self-appointed representatives seek to have a state of their own.” This is a common model, and the Irish separating from Britain, the Basques trying to separate from Spain, the Igbos (as Biafrans) trying to separate from Nigeria, and the Tamils seeking to separate from Sri Lanka are all examples of this phenomenon. “Sons-of-the-soil” refers to an Indigenous population resenting a central-government-induced population shift that occurs when a central government seeks to move population into areas (formerly) dominated

by minority populations. The minority population resents the expansion of the majority population in their midst, and may resort to violence to restore the *status quo ante*. Communal warfare takes place “when (quasi-) organized militias of one ethnic group attack civilians from another ethnic group that is living in the same place . . . Pogroms against Jews in Russia’s Pale of Settlement, against Armenians in the Ottoman Empire as a prelude to the genocide, against (then-called) Negroes in the American South, against Muslims in North India, and against Chinese in Indonesia are well-known examples of this form of ethnic/nationalist violence.”<sup>59</sup>

Laitin suggests in his analysis that despite possible associations between nationalism and inter-national political violence, the data shows little causal relationship. He suggests that a bias in the literature dealing with nationalism “overemphasizes explanations for violence at the expense of explanations for peace,”<sup>60</sup> and that we would do well to look elsewhere for explanations of violence, including what he calls “the weak state,” one “unable to provide basic services to its population, unable to police its peripheries, and unable to distinguish law abiders from lawbreakers.”<sup>61</sup> He cites an economic motive for civil war—“collecting the revenues that ownership of the state avails”—and suggests that insurgents have taken advantage of state incompetence.

The International Crisis Group publishes an annual list of “Conflicts to Watch” around the world, indicating major local conflicts that “serve as mirrors for global trends. They highlight issues with which the international system is obsessed and those toward which it is indifferent.” Their lists for recent years reflect the kind of nationalism-related conflicts described in this volume; in the words of Robert Malley, “these wars tell the story of a global system caught in the early swell of sweeping change, of regional leaders both emboldened and frightened by the opportunities such a transition presents.” The list for 2023 includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- The EU’s integrated approach in Mozambique
- The Sudan: rebooting an endangered transition
- Afghanistan: the Taliban restrict women’s rights, worsening the humanitarian crisis
- Myanmar: post-coup crisis and a flawed election
- The pressing task of advancing peace talks in the South Caucasus
- Keeping the right balance in supporting Ukraine

- Brazil: can Latin America's divides be bridged?
- The Gulf: promoting collective security through regional dialogue
- Iraq: staving off instability in both the near and distant future<sup>62</sup>

### The Contributions in this Volume

The questions of group identities and their relations with the states within which they live are central to most of the essays included here. Chapters in this volume focus on a wide range of settings of conflict, be it conflict currently in “active” status or conflict resolved in a way that the nationalist movement did not seek. This volume is titled “Frustrated Nationalism” because the groups *seeking* sovereignty have not *attained* the full sovereignty being sought, although we will see that some of the groups being examined, such as those in Québec or the Māori, have achieved *some* of what they originally sought, while falling short of full sovereignty. Other groups, such as the Tibetans, have been driven from their home territory and are currently simply trying to keep their national identity and aspirations alive.

David Ryan’s chapter on U.S. foreign policy and self-determination opens the collection, and shows the overall inconsistency of U.S. policy over the years. Ryan notes that “the ideological content of a string of seminal American documents pivots on the concepts of self-determination, liberty, and democracy,” but at the same time American expansionism and globalization “frustrated the self-determination and nationalist aspirations of many” while compromising the sovereignty of nations. The United States is *postcolonial*, Ryan argues, yet in many ways it has emulated European empires. To take one example, “while the traditional interpretation of the 1823 Monroe Doctrine is frequently understood as an American proposition to support the nascent nations of Latin America, it evolved into something quite different.” Looking at American foreign policy from the nineteenth century through the Cold War and the time of the Vietnam War, Ryan shows us that America’s national interest steered American support of, or lack of support of, nationalist movements in many settings around the world.

Nationalism has evolved in Quebec over the past few decades. Raffaele Iacovino shows us that “with the Quebec independence movement in a state of dormancy for some time now, and no longer an imminent threat to the Canadian political system, the Québécois have nevertheless continued to



engage in a national conversation about terms of belonging.” At one point in time, nationalism in Quebec “emerged as the primary agent of modernization and social emancipation for francophones”; Quebec’s strategy of pursuing what was called “integrative pluralism” strengthened interculturalism and allowed Quebec to achieve many of its goals while avoiding the conflicts of earlier years. Modernization and “catching-up” in Quebec during the Quiet Revolution “produced a wholesale change to the main tenets of national identity, away from a defensive posture toward openness to newcomers and tolerance of differences.”

The relationship of Scotland to the United Kingdom is the subject of Christopher Whatley’s chapter “Nation-Building within a Union State.” Scotland joined with England and Wales in a union in 1603, but Whatley shows that the Scots “have never been entirely comfortable with Scotland’s relationship with England.” Scotland’s national characteristics are discussed, as well as the history of feelings of nationalism and the unique identity of the Scots. Whatley discusses why tensions have “deepened and widened” in the past half-century, and reflects on Scotland’s current position in relation to the union with the rest of the United Kingdom. Whatley concludes by noting that while there is no doubt that Scotland could survive as an independent nation, areas of uncertainty remain about what an independent Scotland might look like. Such uncertainties need to be resolved before Scottish voters feel ready to “sever the ties that for well over three centuries have, often uneasily, bound the peoples of Scotland and England together.”

Simone Poliandri has contributed a chapter on the Mi’kmaq peoples of Canada and their pursuit of “contextual nationhood” in Canada. Following discussion of the First Nations of Canada, and the Mi’kma’ki and Mi’kmaq Nation more specifically, Poliandri offers historical analysis of the development of nationhood for the Mi’kmaq under British colonial rule. Today, over 30,000 Mi’kmaq are registered as members of twenty-nine recognized First Nations, all but one in Canada (one is in the U.S. state of Maine), and we see how they have been working on rebuilding and redefining their nation and sense of nationhood. Poliandri shows how certain legal cases became significant in the Mi’kmaq defense of their “commonly-held treaty rights,” most recently in November 2021 with some commercial fishing issues, revealing the “dynamic nature of contemporary Mi’kmaq nationalist sentiments and the rapidity of their nation-rebuilding efforts.”

Neil Harvey and Dolores Trevizo discuss Mexican nationalism and the challenges faced by Mestizaje, Indigenous peoples, and Zapatismo in the twentieth century. Mexico’s “multi-layered national identity” left open

the possibility for conflict, and full constitutional recognition of some key groups remained elusive, undermining Indigenous peoples' ability to pursue their own forms of development. While the reforms that followed the 1910 Revolution led to land reform for many, Harvey and Trevizo show that some groups were left out of the reforms and needed to act to seek a more inclusive and socially just nation. Land reform did "contribute to Mexico's relatively successful nation building," and reforms contributed to the ability of many Indigenous groups to "preserve their cultures, languages, and identities via control over land, water and other national resources." Nation-building worked, and even the armed movement in Chiapas in the 1990s took place *within* Mexican nationalism seeking more equality and inclusiveness, not seeking its own national independence.

Toon van Meijl presents a study of the Māori struggle for Indigenous rights with New Zealand, and how the Indigenous people of New Zealand have adapted their aspirations for nationalism in contemporary times. New Zealand has been more responsive to Māori demands than have been many other governments to ethnic nationalist movements, and the Indigenous groups have received land and other financial compensation for land that can no longer be returned to them. As van Meijl writes, "this process is still ongoing." The role of tribes has been important, as dispossessed lands have been returned to tribal ownership and thus tribes are "re-installing" their sovereignty. We see in this chapter that following the implementation of a settlement process that is trying to respond to and remove Indigenous grievances about wrongs done to them during the colonial era, much of the pressure behind Māori nationalism has decreased. In the settlement process of the 1990s, the goal of the government was to repair historical injustices done to the Māori by returning property to them and by recognizing Māori language and culture as an important part of New Zealand society. Māori cultural nationalism has been relatively successful in the twentieth century, van Meijl shows us, and it has re-introduced pride in Māori culture "that, in turn, also boosted Māori political confidence to never give up their struggle for justice and reconciliation."

The case of Tibet differs from several of the others in this volume because Tibet *was* an independent entity but is now occupied by the People's Republic of China, with little likelihood of regaining its sovereignty. In their chapter, "Virtual Tibet," Åshild Kolås and Tashi Nyima focus on Tibetans' challenge under China. A major concern, they note, is how to "keep the Tibetan heritage alive, or reconstruct the Tibetan nation in the diaspora, while also reinventing "Tibet" in the attempt to define the

‘Tibetan,.’” This chapter describes the context of the struggle to democratize the Tibetan nation and the efforts to have the Tibetan nation *not* disappear through assimilation in other populations around the world through the creation of a government-in-exile with elected representation and virtual government. The role of the Dalai Lama in encouraging a split between secular government of the Tibetan community-in-exile and religious structures of Tibetan Buddhism is examined, even as the authors conclude that “religious and regional identities are fundamental to the very definition of ‘Tibet’ and ‘Tibetaness,’ embedded in the sense of belonging and ‘home’ of Tibetan refugees.”

A chapter on self-determination and national liberation in Kurdistan is offered by Joost Jongerden, who offers a historical perspective of the Kurds’ behavior beginning with the post–World War I context following the Ottoman collapse. The Kurds present a special challenge because they are found in several nation-states today, including Turkey, Iraq, Syria, and Iran. Jongerden focuses on the Kurdistan Workers Party in Turkey between 1971 and 1980, and discusses the relation between Kurdish political actors and the *ideas* of nation, state, and nation-state. He concludes that the Kurdistan Workers Party gave new direction to the idea of self-determination, and that direction is being pursued in political institutions today.

Bernard Nwosu and Kenneth Omeje have contributed a chapter on the Biafra separatist movement and Igbo nationalism in the fourth Nigerian republic. The current nationalist drive goes back to the 1967–1970 period when the Republic of Biafra attempted to secede from Nigeria, ultimately losing a violent and costly war. Nwosu and Omeje explain how in Nigeria nationalist movements do not operate in the same manner as Catalonia, Quebec, or Scotland, but form their own organizations, and they describe the Igbo organizations that have formed and their behavior that is described as “new Igbo nationalism” or “neo-Biafran nationalism.” This new nationalism is placed in the context of Nigeria’s political landscape in which ethnic militias regularly make demands on the national state, and the state needs to respond. Ultimately, the use of military force by the state to suppress separatist agitation “tends to reinforce the resolve of campaigners and fuel their demand for a new state.” The ultimate outcome of the current neo-Biafra movement remains unclear, but the authors offer several possible outcomes, including Nigeria “becoming a totally failed and ultimately dismembered state.”

In the final chapter in this volume Felipe Medina Gutiérrez paints a complex and detailed picture of the Houthi movement in Yemen today. The

Houthi movement—also known as the Ansar Allah movement—emerged in the second half of the twentieth century in Yemen in response to political stresses of the time, including general Middle Eastern politics, the decline of Arab nationalism, the rise of the power of Saudi Arabia due to its petroleum industry, and the spread of religious conservatism and of Wahhabism, among other factors. The “Houthi movement” was known as both a religious and a political force, and its relationship with Iran has been a source of some uncertainty in the current tensions in the region. In recent years the conflict between the Houthi and the Saudi/United Arab Emirates coalition has been a humanitarian catastrophe, and the United Nations has stepped in on more than one occasion to help prevent even more bloodshed. The Houthi are not, strictly speaking, a religious group, but they are anchored in religious ideology, and their current challenge is to blend that ideology with a nationalist discourse to help them achieve their political goals.



This volume seeks to make available to interested readers a number of portraits of contemporary challenges posed by nationalism and the desires of nationalist movements to achieve sovereign status. Nationalism is a state of mind, and “holds that each nation should govern itself, free from outside interference (self-determination), that a nation is a natural and ideal basis for a polity, and that the nation is the only rightful source of political power (popular sovereignty).”<sup>63</sup>

## Notes

1. Philip G. Roeder, *Where Nation-States Come From: Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 3.
2. Roeder, *Where Nation-States Come From*.
3. Roeder, *Where Nation-States Come From*, 12.
4. Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (revised edition) (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971), 4.
5. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.
6. Anthony Smith, ed., *Nationalist Movements* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 1.
7. Kohn, *Nationalism*, 9.
8. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).