



A Sense of Place: An Exploration of National Security in a Post-National State

Major Mathew McInnes

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Exercise Solo Flight

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Major Mathew McInnes

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A SENSE OF PLACE: AN EXPLORATION OF NATIONAL SECURITY IN A POST-NATIONAL STATE

INTRODUCTION

The conception of nationalism and how it operates to build norms and political identities, and how such a conception is intrinsically linked to the idea of threats and of security, provides a fascinating and complex look into what could be the foundations of the global order. While nationalism and identity can provide a primordial unifying force, so too can it be harnessed towards the creation of fault lines between people, and as a source of conflict and of division. This seemingly intractable contradiction, of nationality as both a unifying and fractious force, can perhaps be thought of as in part due to it constituting an extremely complex adaptive system.¹ Subsequently, this paper adopts what could be described as a humanist approach of how a stable global system relies upon our collective ability to construct societal identities.² This approach will then be applied to the research question, given Canada's declaration of being the first "post-national" country, *what does the concept of national security mean within an ostensibly post-national state?*

By way of context, Canada's current head of government of nearly nine years, Justin Trudeau, has summarized Canadian national identity as "Canada could be the first *post-national* state. There is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada" (emphasis added).³ This statement has been subsequently characterized as no "off-the-cuff pronouncement", but instead representative of a serious policy shift that may have in part "replaced Canada's traditional emblems and narratives" over the past nine years, with some going so far as to attribute its "aim [being] to expunge vast swaths of our history from the collective memory".⁴ Any conception of a post-national state would clearly have significant logical implications on *national* security, as quite simply then, what nation is being secured? What of the idea of national interests, or of national values? Answering these questions, and the very idea of

* This paper is an expansion of a 1000-word primer the author created for the conduct of a DS567 seminar entitled "How Nationalism Operates as a Means to Build Norms and Political Identity", 15 April 2024.

¹ Simon A. Levin, Helen V. Milner, and Charles Perrings, "The Dynamics of Political Polarization," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 50 (December 14, 2021): 1,

<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2116950118>; John H. Miller and Scott E. Page, *Complex Adaptive Systems: An Introduction to Computational Models of Social Life* (Princeton University Press, 2009). Essentially, Complex Adaptive Systems are predicated on many individual interacting parts and where individual behavior could be in according with simple rules or instructions but whose interactions lead to the emergence of extremely complex patterns and behaviors that cannot be predicted through simple study of its constituent parts. As such, the system essentially takes on a 'life of its own' that can adapt and learn in response to the environment.

² Humanism has many meanings, however, "Not only is such a large assortment of definitions confusing, but the definitions themselves are often redundant or impertinent ... The definition of humanism as anthropocentricity or human-centredness has a firmer claim to correctness". As such, this essay uses humanism in line with this approach in rendering highly complex systems as macrocosms of the individual human experience. See Robert Grudin, "Humanism - Definition, Principles, History, & Influence," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, March 29, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/humanism>.

³ Guy Lawson, "Trudeau's Canada, Again," *The New York Times*, December 8, 2015, sec. Magazine, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/magazine/trudeaus-canada-again.html>.

⁴ Konrad Yakabuski, "Opinion: Trudeau's Culture War on Canada's Symbols Erases History," *The Globe and Mail*, May 11, 2023, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-trudeaus-culture-war-on-canadas-symbols-erases-history/>.

national security itself, are entirely predicated on the axiomatic presupposition of the existence of a nation in the first place. Subsequently, if Canada is to be the world's "first post-national state" with "no core identity" and "no mainstream" set of values, then understanding what Canada is then, if not a nation, would be of vital importance (normally one would say here, of vital 'national' importance).

Assuming a single paper could ever purport to 'solve' the twin issues of Canadian national identity and security would be rather grandiose, and so instead will explore our collective ability to construct societal identities, how the concept of nationality provides a powerful foundation for the building of these identities, and with territoriality, a sense of place within the world. This then provides the conceptual underpinnings necessary to grapple with the idea of post-nationalism, concluding such a thing is highly unlikely to ever truly be practically achievable, and explores instead the concept of plurinationality and the risks inherent in adopting an ostensibly "post-national" national security stance.

DEFINITIONS: ESTABLISHING A BASELINE

Although "[e]thnicity and nationalism are 'essentially contested concepts'" which "makes any attempt of defining ethno-national things, such as citizenship, a daunting task",⁵ and the concept of identity "has long been one of the slipperiest concepts in the social scientist's lexicon",⁶ it would be nearly impossible to discuss such widely contested concepts without concrete definitions. Subsequently, to better support a wider discussion as to the nature of nationality, this paper will use the Oxford dictionary to help define exactly what is meant by certain key terms.⁷

A **tribe** is defined as "a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader". A **community** is a group "living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common" resulting in "a feeling of fellowship with others", while **Ethnicity** would be a form of community based on "the quality or fact of belonging to a population group or subgroup made up of people who share a common cultural background or descent", and given that one can not share a common cultural background without some form of immersion, or in effect having that culture 'passed on' or inherited from someone, we could render this definition as simply *belonging to a group united through common descent*. A **nation** is subsequently defined as "a large body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular country or territory", which we can again basically shorten to our own definition of being '*united by common ethnocultural descent and inhabiting a particular territory*' (and being a large group meaning

⁵ Costica Dumbrava, "Super-Foreigners and Sub-Citizens: Mapping Ethno-National Hierarchies of Foreignness and Citizenship in Europe," *Ethnopolitics* 14, no. 3 (May 27, 2015): 297, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2014.994883>.

⁶ Steven Vertovec, "Transnationalism and Identity," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27, no. 4 (October 1, 2001): 573, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830120090386>.

⁷ As dictionaries are descriptive, not prescriptive, they represent the current consensus of the language population in terms of what words mean, and as these meanings shift over time these shifts are reflected in the updates to these dictionaries. As the Oxford dictionary represents one of the English language's most respected repositories, all dictionary definition in this paper are provided by "Oxford Dictionary," Oxford Languages, accessed April 10, 2024, <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>.

larger than a community or tribe) as sharing a common history, culture, or language are only possible if passed on or descended through someone else (and culture itself interwoven with history and language). Being aboriginal or **indigenous** means “inhabiting or existing in a land from the earliest times”, a **native** simply as “a person born in a specified place”, and a **citizen** as “a legally recognized subject or national of a state”. A common thread here, and thus one definition that is missing, is that of **culture**, which is defined as “the attitudes and behavior characteristic of a particular social group”, or how such a group *thinks, feels, and acts* about someone (such as a different social group) or something (such as an event, principle, or ideology) which is itself intertwined with the concept of values, and all of which are shaped by the family and community one was brought up in.

So, in other words, humanity is made of individuals who are born into families. A group of families, inherently sharing common descent, would traditionally be considered a tribe. These related tribes constitute an ethnicity (being a collective group united through common descent), and a nation therefore is ethnicity with the addition of a prescribed territory (i.e. ethnicity + territory = nation). Therefore, a nation-state would be ‘ethnicity + territory + polity’ (with a multi-national state consisting of ‘ethnicities’ vice simply ‘ethnicity’). One may have noticed that nowhere in these definitions were genetics or phenotypes mentioned, and so the idea of descent and that of genetic inheritance are not one and the same (such as culturo-linguistic descent), although as we will explore later, they are to varying extents interlinked.

Intuitively, having a deeply rooted sense of place would be intractably interwoven with the idea of indigeneity in terms of having cultural and biological roots in a place since the “dawn of time”, or in other words, being created or born as a distinct people in that place through the process of ethnogenesis,⁸ and subsequently then, from where a nationality draws its sense of communal territory.⁹ Far less deeply rooted would be the idea of being native to a place in that this term is inherently related to the individual vice the group, and so the place that a person was physically born (a native of the city of Toronto for example) may not be the same place to which they are indigenous. Finally, we have perhaps the least deeply personal aspect of all, which is the idea of citizenship being a legal status bestowed upon someone as an official member of a polity or state.

DEFINITIONS: NATIONALITY, CULTURE, AND RELIGION

An astute reader may notice that the concept of religion has been absent in the exploration of definitions above, and such an absence may be suspect given its central role in identity formation, such as Israel as a “Jewish state” or of many explicitly Muslim states throughout the world. While German constitutional scholar Carl Schmitt may have coined a 1922 dictum that “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized

⁸ See, for example, the Supreme Court of Canada’s exploration of the concept of ethnogenesis within the *Powley* decision: *R. v. Powley*, 2 SCR 207 (Supreme Court of Canada 2003).

⁹ Ethnogenesis, as the process of the creation of a new ethnicity, has been characterized by the courts and Justice Canada as: “ethnogenesis is not the mere result of the biological mixing of genetically discrete populations [but] is the result of cultural identification as an ethnically distinct social group by a population which interprets biological ties in a particular, socially relevant manner, and participates in a shared culture”. See: Research and Statistics Division of the Department of Justice (Canada), Anna Paletta, and Kimberly Burnett, “A Program of Research Related to Historical Métis Communities,” *Just Research*, April 2, 2008, <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/jr15/p5.html>.

theological concepts”,¹⁰ a ‘chicken and egg’ debate then arises: are all practical manifestations of civic life cultural (therefore religious beliefs are simply codifications of a pre-existing cultural milieu), or instead the reverse? A commonly expressed theory is one of the theological moving to the secular, aptly represented in the following:

Secularisation was a one-way street: societies gradually – but inexorably – move away from being focused around the sacred and a concern with the divine to a situation characterised by significant diminution of religious power and authority.¹¹

However, this narrative assumes that any given conflict, practice, or stance on a matter emanates from a place of religiosity. One should not discount the potential that the reverse may be true, which is to say that what is commonly thought of as to do with religion may instead be entirely a matter of culture, and that those aspects of religion that affect civic life are simply the ensconced expression of pre-existing cultural practices, in effect 'rebranded' under the umbrella of religion.

This discussion on nationality (which we defined above as a social group united by common ethnocultural descent and inhabiting a particular territory) and religion is perhaps such an intractable one due to how tightly these two concepts have traditionally been interwoven. This is likely since ethnogenesis as the process of the formation and development of ethnic groups often occurs in parallel with the formation and development of religion. For example, the development of a Roman, Greek, or Nordic nationality arose concomitantly with the Roman, Greek, and Nordic religions. In fact, if culture is how a group “thinks, feels, and acts” on any given matter, then one can readily surmise the existence of a significant overlap with religion. In this way, the codification of a system of narrative, custom, and of values embodied in religion could then naturally be conceived as a sub-category of culture.

There is more to religion than just narrative, custom, and of values, however. Religion is predicated in the belief and worship of some form of superhuman or supreme power and so the existence of narrative, customs, and of values do not necessary logically require belief in such a superpower. Thus, there being an additional component to religion beyond just capturing a subcomponent of culture represented in our listing. While it would be relatively easy to declare that culture and religion are interrelated and leave it at that, before making such a determination, a deeper sense of these contested concepts will be explored.

Cultural anthropologist Monique Scheer attempts to cut through some of this semantic ambiguity by labelling what she refers to as “Culture 2”, which is the type of culture that “is behind the idea of multiculturalism, in which ‘culture’ is a synonym for ‘ethnic group’, [or] ‘ethnicity’” and that “belongs to you, and you belong to it. Culture is a source of identity by

¹⁰ Andrew Hurrell, “Cultural Diversity within Global International Society,” in *Culture and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2020), 126, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108754613.006>.

¹¹ Jeffrey Haynes, “Religion and International Conflict,” in *International Security Studies: Theory and Practice*, by Peter Hough, Bruce Pilbeam, and Wendy Stokes (Oxford: Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 164, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cfvlibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=6264271>.

virtue of being one's 'origin' or 'home', two very politically laden concepts".¹² However, the now dominant Boasian school of anthropology view that "assert[s] that cultural differences are not the result of biological differences" couches the idea of "Culture 2" as distinct from any association of "race" given that "all surviving human groups have evolved equally" (as *homo sapiens sapiens* constituting "the subspecies of *Homo sapiens* that consists of the only living members of genus *Homo*, modern human beings").¹³ This Boasian point of view relies on the type of culture encapsulated in "Culture 2" to advocate for the existence of a "cultural essence that deserves to be preserved for its own sake", thereby developing an idea of culture "into an instrument of anti-colonialism and anti-racism that is still mobilized to articulate both the idea of rightful cultural property (and accordingly, the notion that it can be stolen) and a right to cultural survival".¹⁴

In contrast, Scheer designates "Culture 1" as "something that happens rather than something pre-existing and static that must be passed down and cared for", or as a "dimension, not a thing".¹⁵ Instead of culture being one's origin or home as in Culture 2, in the conception of Culture 1 "home is not objectively 'there'", instead it is just a set of "practices that frame a place" that then "create a sense of belonging".¹⁶ Or in other words there are separate conceptions of culture as a "thing" and culture as an action, akin to the difference between being a football player versus being someone who happens to be playing football. So, how do these cultures fit together with religion?

To explore this matter, Scheer once again delves deeper into the divergent meanings of what religion signifies. The individual approach signifies "Religion 1" where it represents "a question of personal style, aesthetic preference, and individual opinion" that can be freely chosen, customized, or cast off based on the needs of the individual.¹⁷ Contrasted with this, "Religion 2" is communal and it is this conception of religion that underpins the census forms and pie chart breakdowns of a population by religious group, or the discourse of powers, rights, privileges, and of religious pluralism and so is seen not as a "purely individual and private matter" centred on belief in a supreme power, but instead is seen "as heritage and a tradition that must be passed down" and so then as a group identity primarily, which then "makes the question of belief somewhat secondary".¹⁸

So, to put all of this to the test in an attempt to gain a greater understanding of the ideas of culture and of religion within a wider conception of nationality, we can look at the expression (if someone were to say), 'I live in a Christian country, so while I am not necessarily a practicing Christian, I am a cultural Christian'. In this sentence we see the ideas of nationality, religion, and culture all tightly intertwined. In this case the individual could be

¹² Monique Scheer, "Culture and Religion: Remarks on an Indeterminate Relationship," *Religion and Society* 13, no. 1 (September 2022): 113, <https://doi.org/10.3167/arrs.2022.130107>.

¹³ Sol Tax, "Franz Boas," Britannica Academic, accessed April 26, 2024, <https://academic-eb-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/levels/collegiate/article/Franz-Boas/15808>; John Rafferty, "Homo Sapiens Sapiens," Britannica Academic, accessed April 26, 2024, <https://academic-eb-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/levels/collegiate/article/Homo-sapiens-sapiens/632552>.

¹⁴ Scheer, "Culture and Religion," 113.

¹⁵ Scheer, 114.

¹⁶ Scheer, 114.

¹⁷ Scheer, 112.

¹⁸ Scheer, 113.

said to employ “Religion 2” (living in a Christian society, i.e. as an identarian heritage) and a tacit use through rejection of “Religion 1” (*I am not Christian per se*), coupled with “Culture 1” (but I *do* Christian customary practices), and “Culture 2” (Christianity as being a form of ethnic “home”). So, in this way we resolve our paradox of religion being a clear subset of culture while at the same time being something distinctly apart, or at the very least the idea of religion-as-culture possessing some hazily defined exceptions. This is because the signifier “Religion” signifies multiple different ideas.¹⁹ As such, “Religion 1” catches the “additional component to religion beyond just capturing a subcomponent of culture” mentioned above, that of individual spiritual belief in a divine or supreme power, whereas “Religion 2” is a subcomponent of culture in that it instead represents a shared identity through descent (or “as heritage and a tradition that must be passed down”).

To tie this into nationality then, “Culture 1” is seen as just a set of things people do, whereas “Culture 2” sees culture instead as a deeply held sense of origin, belonging, and of home and, therefore, the former can be seen as a ‘weak’ bonding agent between people (simply doing similar things), and the latter as ‘strong’ (sharing a communal identity). When it comes to the concept of nationality then, the most relevant sources of such *national* identity can be found in “Culture 2” (culture as an “essence that deserves to be preserved for its own sake”) and “Religion 2” (“as heritage and a tradition that must be passed down” instead of actual spiritual belief *per se*). Thus, for the purposes of treating those components of religion that affect the idea of *communal identity* as a “thing” in and of itself, only the meanings captured within what has been termed “Culture 2” and “Religion 2” are of any immediate relevance to the ideas surrounding nationality.

As a result, this paper takes the view that when it comes to the exploration of the concepts surrounding nationality, actual individual spirituality provides less explanatory power than the ‘culture-first’ viewpoint, and therefore that those aspects of religion that affect civic life encapsulated under “Religion 2”, are simply the ensconced expression of pre-existing cultural practices.²⁰ That being said, cultural values, beliefs, thoughts, and actions held under the umbrella of religion can serve as powerful unifying symbols buttressing a shared sense of identity and of community, and therefore serving to make a shared sense of nationality all the stronger; in effect making it a powerful cultural tool which certain societies may then find either explicitly or implicitly worth preserving, despite an apparent lack of expressed spiritual faith at the individual level, or even defacto state laity.

SECTION 1: ETHNICITY AND NATIONALITY

As we stated in our definitions section, ethnicity is conceptually defined as essentially a group united by common descent. While descent can be genetic descent (i.e. kin groups) or cultural (i.e. through adoption or naturalization), in an age before significant mobility and where traditional groups lived in relatively small numbers, the concepts of ethnicity and kin-group would have been tightly intertwined, and as will be explored, the genetic makeup of groups themselves are shaped by the territories in which they arose. In the modern era such

¹⁹ To borrow from the field of Saussurean semiotics.

²⁰ While the existence of causal feedback loops between culture and religion, and of syncretism, are certainly possibilities, exploration of these logical interdependencies and consequences would merit a paper all its own, and so for the purpose of simplicity and brevity, we will leave this line of exploration cordoned off.

associations between ancestral kin, territory, and ethnicity becomes increasingly loose with the advent and continued increase in scale of pervasive mass mobility, which is to say some of the basic tenets of association linking societies together in ancient times may no longer be true in the modern era. However, we will start with an exploration of the historical underpinnings of ethnicity and nationality.

Before doing so, however, it should be acknowledged that any discussions of nationality and genetic ancestry are inherently fraught topics, and an uncomfortable one at that. History is replete with examples of extremist ideologies predicated on the creation and weaponization of narratives in some way woven around these concepts, with Professor Patrick Geary of Princeton University going so far as to argue that the concept of a nation (defined by shared ethnicity, language, and political unity) is a relatively recent invention and that the belief in a glorious, ancient national past is often predicated in myth, twisting facts or inventing narratives, to justify national borders and political goals.²¹ Which means any treading on these grounds likely then *should* feel deeply discomfiting. That said, the idea of familial ties being the first group identity that a human is born into, and subsequently the idea of kin-groups as a fundamental component of human nature, are not something that can simply be ignored as they serve as the foundations upon which other wider senses of identity are built. However, and as will be explored in greater detail further below (Figure 5), this paper takes the view that extremism is essentially its own ideology, and so any discourse whether it be the idea of family, nationality, religion, politics, etc. when taken to its most extreme form becomes divested from the root idea itself, and instead all of these various strands coalesce into the same practical space, ideological extremism. As such, in exploring such a fraught and contested concept such as ethnicity, this paper takes the view that extremist identitarianism forms a separate ideology unto itself.

When looking at shared identity and the more tangible products then of trust and cooperation, and then at cooperation amongst mammals more generally, “research over the last thirty years shows that cooperation in animal societies most frequently involves kin and is seldom highly developed in groups consisting of unrelated individuals”, and so then some level of structure is required to mediate productive social groupings in sizes greater than that of known kin.²² Other studies have supported this, for example with Oxford University professors David-Barrett and Dunbar finding that in traditional human groupings, typically one to two hundred people represent communities where almost all are kin by marriage or by descent, and this thus represents the largest size where all members are known through the living memory of those present (i.e. about five generations where grand-parents remember grandparents, for example).²³ One 1956 study, that still holds value today, analyzed maximum village sizes in 30 traditional small-scale societies and found that there exists a “critical threshold” at around 500 people, after which point “social cohesion depends on having a top-down authoritarian organisational structure, associated with the emergence of specialist social,

²¹ Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton University Press, 2003).

²² Tim Clutton-Brock, “Cooperation between Non-Kin in Animal Societies,” *Nature* 462, no. 7269 (November 2009): 51–57, <https://doi.org/10.1038/nature08366>.

²³ Tamas David-Barrett and Robin I. M. Dunbar, “Fertility, Kinship and the Evolution of Mass Ideologies,” *Journal of Theoretical Biology* 417 (March 21, 2017): 20–27, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtbi.2017.01.015>.

political and economic roles”.²⁴ While we will pick up this thread once again when we explore “Why Nationality” further on below, suffice it say that it appears that the most basic or primordial groups were rooted in kin-groups, forming the nucleus of indigenous tribes or clans, and this is true not just of humans but of other social animals as well. However, kin-groups are only one part of the equation as humans have clearly moved across different areas, fragmented, and coalesced into new groups constantly over time. As such, the idea of ethnogenesis becomes relevant here, which is to say the formation and development of new ethnic groups which could not occur if human ethnicity was in a mode of perpetual stasis.

To explore this idea of ethnogenesis, we can look to the end of the ice age when humans began migrating from the south following the retreating ice sheets towards the north of Europe. Now, when it comes to genetic changes, it takes “thousands of years in a long-lived species such as humans to accrue in the gene pool”, which can constitute a problem in adapting during periods of dramatic environment change, and so “human biology therefore includes additional, more rapidly acting adaptive processes to cope with such change”.²⁵ One such mechanism is that of polygenic adaptation, and a particular example is that of the depigmentation that occurred when humans moved from southern areas of high solar radiation exposure, to those further north with drastically reduced exposures. As a result of this rapid change in environment for those populations now moving into areas of drastically lower solar exposure, what constituted the optimum phenotype in terms of levels of skin pigmentation to suit that environment significantly shifted. Subsequently, in this case, we find evidence that:

‘selective sweeps’ — greatly accelerated periods of evolution by natural selection — led to genes for lighter skin becoming fixed in the population over the course of just a few thousand years ... it didn’t happen just once. Genetic evidence shows that the ancestors of modern western Europeans and the ancestors of modern eastern Asians underwent independent genetic changes leading to the evolution of lighter skin.²⁶

In this case, studies show that polygenic adaptation in humans can occur within roughly 3,000 years, and as such “pigmentation is a polygenic trait encompassing some of the most visible phenotypic variation observed in humans” with “estimates of selection ranging from around 2–10% per generation” for lighter hair, eye, and skin pigmentation.²⁷

²⁴ Robin I. M. Dunbar and Richard Sosis, “Optimising Human Community Sizes,” *Evolution and Human Behavior* 39, no. 1 (January 1, 2018): 110, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2017.11.001>.

²⁵ Christopher W Kuzawa and Zaneta M Thayer, “Timescales of Human Adaptation: The Role of Epigenetic Processes,” *Epigenomics* 3, no. 2 (April 2011): 224, <https://doi.org/10.2217/epi.11.11>.

²⁶ Nina G Jablonski, “Why Human Skin Comes in Colors,” *AnthroNotes : Museum of Natural History Publication for Educators* 32, no. 1 (September 12, 2014): 9, <https://doi.org/10.5479/10088/22456>.

²⁷ Sandra Wilde et al., “Direct Evidence for Positive Selection of Skin, Hair, and Eye Pigmentation in Europeans during the Last 5,000 y,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 111, no. 13 (April 1, 2014): 4832–37, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1316513111>.

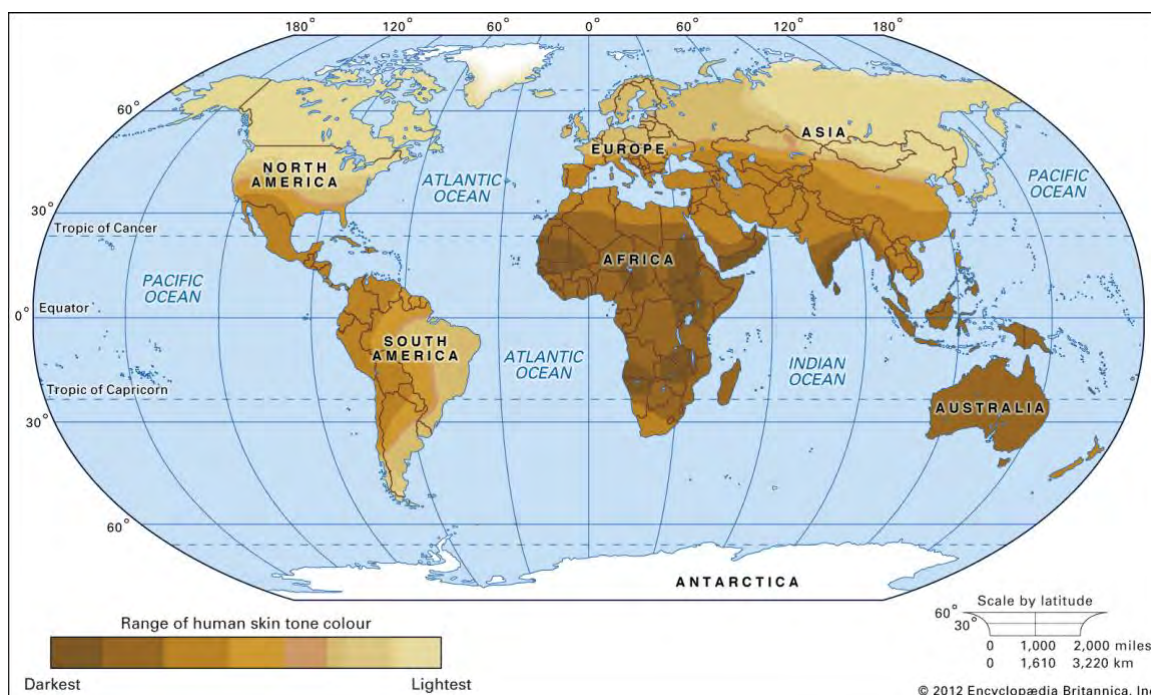


Figure 1 - Map of range of skin tone of indigenous populations before colonization and mass migration (correlates with solar radiation exposure levels) and known as the “Sepia Rainbow”.²⁸

Subsequently, we can see that the range of pigmentation within the “Sepia Rainbow” is a resultant of genetic adaptation to geographic location.²⁹ So, when it comes to the idea of ethnicity with a territorial area of origin, or “sense of place”, the place shapes the people even at the genetic level, and in turn the people shape the lands in a sort of interactive loop. In prehistoric times, pigmentation would likely have had very little to do with identity formation, simply because the vast majority of humans would never have seen other people of vastly differing skin tones due to the ranges of travel, the existence of gradient clines (i.e. unlike shown in the simplified depiction in Figure 1, there are no distinct and sharp gradient lines of skin tone), significant natural variations within a population, as well as the varying extent of radiation exposure between individuals (such as how many hours of outdoor labour was performed day to day with some becoming more tanned than others). While the rate of dermal pigmentation has nothing to do with nationality itself, it is due to geographic adaptation and so

²⁸ Audrey Smedley, Yasuko Takezawa, and Peter Wade, “Race - Modern Scientific Explanations of Human Biological Variation,” in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, March 29, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/race-human/Modern-scientific-explanations-of-human-biological-variation>.

²⁹ More specifically, before humans became hairless, they likely had pale skin. However, upon becoming hairless, it is posited that high levels of solar radiation exposure upon human skin led to folate deficiency and subsequently the adaptation of melanination developed creating dark skin tones. However, when humans migrated into Northern climates, this dark skin created Vitamin D deficiencies, and as the problem of folate deficiency due to solar radiation did not exist in northern climates, a process of demelanination subsequently occurred. See David Pacchioli, “The Sepia Rainbow - The Fascinating Story of Human Skin,” Pennsylvania State University, November 18, 2015, <https://www.psu.edu/news/research/story/sepia-rainbow/>.

is indicative of rough territorial origins in terms of latitude, and so with the advent of mass mobility, began to serve as a proxy for how far North or South one originated or was indigenous to. Note, however, that this does not account for East-West differentiation, and so there is more to physical differences between groups of humans than of polygenic adaptation, but as well the somewhat random genetic mutation or drifting which is then passed on to an expanding new group also contributes to the physical component of ethnogenesis.

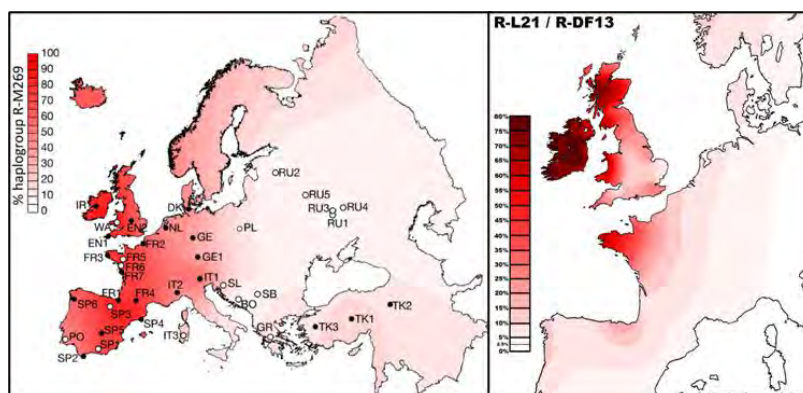


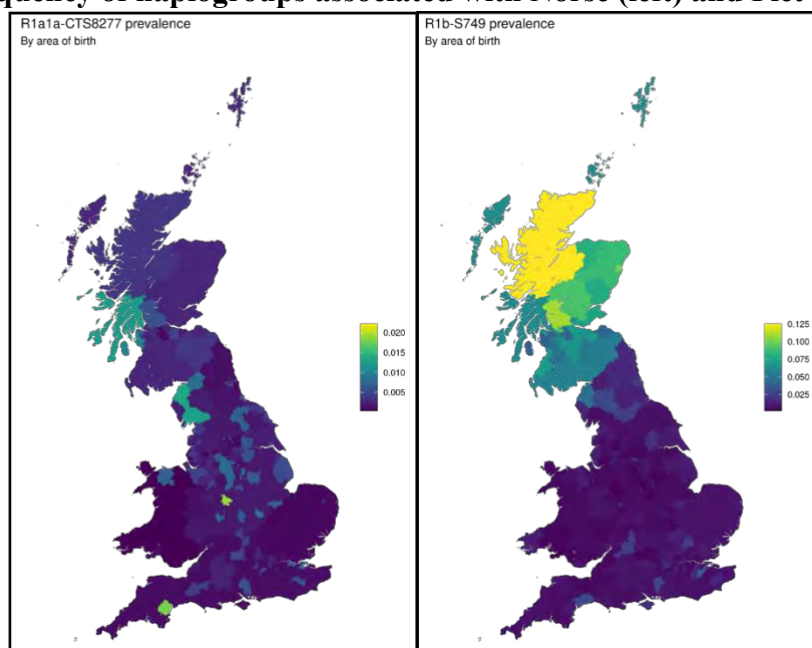
Figure 2 – Frequency of haplogroup R-M269 (left) and a subclade R-L21 (right).³⁰

For example, we can explore the process of genetic change within Europe to see the overlaps of ethnogenetic development. In Figure 2 we can see the primary haplogroup associated with the ranges of the pre-Roman Celts known as R-M269 and may date from up to 10,000 years ago. Within M269 a gene variation known as Haplogroup R-L151 occurred perhaps approximately 5,000 years ago, and in turn within that group, another change known as R-L21 occurred roughly 3,000 years ago and is associated with the Insular Celts (i.e. the indigenous peoples of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Brittany). If we then zoom in for a fourth time into Scotland in Figure 3 below, we can see the genetic echoes in today's population of

³⁰ Patricia Balaesque et al., “A Predominantly Neolithic Origin for European Paternal Lineages,” *PLOS Biology* 8, no. 1 (January 19, 2010): e1000285, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.1000285>; “Haplogroup R-L21,” in *Wikipedia*, March 16, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Haplogroup_R-L21&oldid=1214079551.

the Norse (Norwegian) kingdom of the Western Isles (left) and those associated with the Kingdom of the Picts (right) which later merged forming the Kingdom of Scotland (Alba).

Figure 3 – Frequency of haplogroups associated with Norse (left) and Pict (right) descent



in contemporary Scotland.³¹

If we look at the cultural identity of Scotland today, we can see distinct cultural elements associated with a Scottish sense of nationality, but internally we still have a distinction between the highlands and the lowlands even in terms of language (Gaelic versus Scots for example), and fascinatingly enough, these cultural identities are almost perfectly correlated with the emergence of a cascade of distinct genetic haplogroups of which we can still see echoed today.

This may, in part, illuminate some of the tensions in identifying nationality and what it means to belong. For example, the tension between what it means (to continue the example of Scotland) to be what we could call a ‘civic national’ (culturally and legally “Scottish”) and an ‘indigenous national’ (i.e. a genetic descendent of the group, who through the process of ethnogenesis, emerged as highland Scottish clans prior to recorded history for example), which is muddled even further by the fact that both concepts are covered by the same word, “Scottish” (which would force us to adopt placeholders like ‘Scottish 1’ versus ‘Scottish 2’ in order to have a cogent discussion over what amounts to two different concepts much as we did with ‘Religion 1’ and ‘Culture 2’ earlier). Subsequently, we can see that the ‘birth’ of distinct ethnicities within a defined territory (i.e. a distinct indigenous nation) are a confluence of both social construction and physical reality, and so often form deeply rooted conceptions of identity not easily simply dispensed with as mere fabrication.

³¹ James F. Wilson and Paul RHJ Timmers, “Prevalence of Y Chromosome Haplogroups by Area of Birth in UK Biobank,” *2011 Census*, June 6, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.7488/ds/3472>.

So far, we have discussed definitions, nationality, culture, religion, and ethnicity all with the presupposition that nations simply exist. However, before going further it is probably worth questioning that assumption. Namely, why does nationality exist in the first place and then subsequently, can societies exist without it?

SECTION 2: WHY NATIONALITY?

What do culture, belief, and ideology all have in common in practical effect? What is everyone trying to achieve as derived not through their words, but their actions? Why pursue resources or conquest in the first place? A variety of points of origin are highlighted as the potential locus of this central driving force: religion, trade, ideology, language, class, and so on, but at what point could these be said to be products vice origins? Perhaps the central driving force is an idea that could be termed as ‘taming the wild’, which is all to say the creation of a safe and secure *space* for one’s self and family.³² We see this basic tendency in a variety of different ways and levels, for example, the drive towards home ownership and the proverbial picket fence and back yard, of the right to national self-determination, and the buildings of parks and so on, all amounting to the creation of a sense of place, of belonging, and of what ultimately means an environment that is free of predators and other dangers, which is to say secure, and that is of us, for us, and reflects us.

As such, the concept of nationality, being an ethnocultural community with a defined territory, is inherently *exclusionary* in the sense of the distinction between what is national versus non-national, of safety and of danger, of the tamed and the wild, and the known and the unknown, all of which is fundamental to the concept of nationality itself. Or, as Olaf Zenker aptly put it:

in fact all understandings of nationhood and all forms of nationalism are simultaneously inclusive and exclusive. What varies is not the fact or even the degree of inclusiveness or exclusiveness, but the bases or criteria of inclusion and exclusion.³³

That said, perhaps nationality could be seen to represent a framework providing for external disunity (exclusionary) while concurrently an essential internal *unifying* force through a sense of communal identity via shared ethnocultural decent and with a specified sense of territory, which ultimately could be perhaps distilled as the drive to achieve a *sense of place*.

Generally, to gain and maintain such a sense of place requires strength, and strength particularly in prehistoric times lay predominantly in numbers. So, society could be seen as a logical by-product of the structure necessary to harness strength to generate power. To hold such structures together requires that individuals collaboratively work together according to a prescribed framework where sacrifice and reward would generally be expected to achieve

³² Family is used here as one’s immediate family expanding outwards (grand children, great grand children, etc) which over time gives rise to a wider group bound together under a shared sense of cultural and biological descent, a nation, which outsiders could also join if adopted by the national group through the process of naturalization.

³³ Olaf Zenker, “Autochthony, Ethnicity, Indigeneity and Nationalism: Time-Honouring and State-Oriented Modes of Rooting Individual-Territory-Group Triads in a Globalizing World,” *Critique of Anthropology* 31, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X10393438>.

some semblance of equilibrium (i.e. problems of cheating, freeloading, criminality, etc all of which are highly corrosive to social cohesion) and thus one would expect that a precondition for the formation of such groups would be a relatively high degree of trust between members. Subsequently, a trade-off is created. One is where the “minimum viable size for a community to function” has been shown to be, particularly for agricultural communities, approximately 50 people,³⁴ while at the same time the highest levels of trust are the easiest to gain and maintain in immediate family groups of roughly 10 or less. So, in this way we could conceptualize a system whereby the smallest elements possess the strongest ‘natural’ bonds, and the largest the weakest, with subsequently stronger structures required to effectively bond the largest groups.

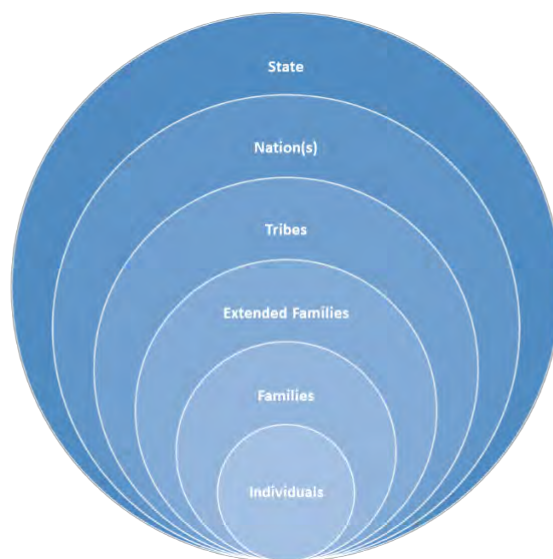


Figure 4 – Onion diagram depicting smaller to larger groupings nested within each.

Work on so-called ‘natural’ sizes for human communities have varied, but overall, some macro trends can be identified. For example, one study looking at Hutterite communities in the U.S., finding that communities naturally seemed to split once approaching 150 people in size, as this was in their experience the point at which social cohesion would begin to break down without the implementation of formal systems of laws and enforcement.³⁵ With other analyses showing that natural (which is to say societies without formal structures) having an “optimal community sizes that approximate 50, 150 and 500, with deviations away from these values resulting in reduced functionality and increased risk”.³⁶ This also roughly corresponds with the sizes of military groupings, with a section being roughly 10 soldiers (representative of an immediate family of a set of parents with six to eight children), a platoon of 30 soldiers (extended family with aunts, uncles, and cousins), a company of about 150 soldiers (the kin-group), and a battalion of about 500 soldiers (the tribe or clan), which intuitively makes sense given that military close combat organizations are, through a sort of Darwinian evolution, optimized to ensure the highest levels of mutual trust and shared identity possible in the face

³⁴ Dunbar and Sosis, “Optimising Human Community Sizes,” 108.

³⁵ Carolyn L. Olsen, “The Demography of Colony Fission from 1878–1970 Among the Hutterites of North America,” *American Anthropologist* 89, no. 4 (1987): 823–37, <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1987.89.4.02a00040>.

³⁶ Dunbar and Sosis, “Optimising Human Community Sizes,” 111.

of some of the most demanding and corrosive conditions possible, which is to say close combat.

Subsequently, for such a group to grow larger, and therefore require the coordinative structures necessary to provide group agency (such as the faculties required to exercise foresight, planning, and control) necessitates a structure to, in effect, create a macrocosm of the individual, thus the rise of the concept of the group bound together as a corporation sole that has the ability to act as a single legal person.³⁷ The structures necessary to harness together disparate individuals are those rooted in collective identity beyond that of kin and thus the importance of a constructed national identity. The corollary being that a breakdown in such identity and cohesion would then lead to the breakdown of the society itself. For example, reporter John Ivison picks up on this sentiment when describing the fall of the Roman Empire:

However, the failure to explain itself to its increasing multitude of [ethnically disparate] citizens, or invite their co-operation, led to the demise of its collective mission. The sense of citizenship died of starvation ... All empires, all states, all organizations of human society are, in the ultimate, things of understanding and will. There remained no will for the Roman Empire in the world, and so it came to an end.³⁸

Subsequently, the collective idea of nationality and then subsequently that of the state provides large groups the ability to treat with each other as single legal persons and thus the rise of polities and of international relations, where “international society in which sovereignty provided the primary container for difference” and so where this sovereign power “became the principal institution that would guard against the claims of any universal or universalizing authority”.³⁹ Or in other words, the creation of national groups embodied within a sovereign authority may provide a framework for the consolidation and control over communal power providing a countervailing force guaranteeing freedom for a prescribed group against the threat of outside actors and from any single global hegemon.⁴⁰

SECTION 3: A SENSE OF PLACE, NATIONALISM AND CONFLICT

While a common assumption is that resource scarcity is a primary driver of distrust and conflict amongst groups, this may not be borne out by evidence or at least be an oversimplification. For example, one analytical study found that “relative deprivation, as measured by economic inequality or poor economic growth, is neither necessary nor sufficient for internal conflict and that violence results from more general political attitudes (political

³⁷ Corporation sole is used here to evoke the idea of chiefship where the chief would provide the locus point of the group and act on its behalf, which in turn gave rise to kings and the sovereign, and thus to sovereignty and the king being the legal human embodiment of the nation.

³⁸ John Ivison, “The Decline and Fall of Canada,” *National Post*, April 30, 2024, National edition, sec. Canada.

³⁹ Hurrell, “Cultural Diversity within Global International Society,” 123.

⁴⁰ Which evolved into the principles of the inviolability of the state and of territorial integrity enshrined in international law and expressed in documents such as the Charter of the United Nations, see Michael Wood, “Territorial Integrity,” *The Princeton University Encyclopedia of Self-Determination*, accessed April 11, 2024, <https://pesd.princeton.edu/node/686>.

alienation)”, and subsequently that “proxies for development, state strength and institutional instability all turn out to be much more robust predictors of conflict”.⁴¹

While it is widely known that the Holocaust resulted in the deaths of over six million Jews, what is perhaps lesser known is that the Nazi plan of *Generalplan Ost* resulted in the extermination of nearly six million Slavs,⁴² although some research puts this figure at 11 million throughout the entire war period.⁴³ This extermination of millions of people was predicated in a significant way on the Nazi’s weaponization of Friedrich Ratzel’s work on what he popularized as “Lebensraum”, or ‘living space’ based on the Darwinian conceptualization of “the state as a living entity vying for space”.⁴⁴ Again, we see here the idea of “blood and soil” or fundamentally the concept of a shared ethnicity applied to a defined territory, and the drive to establish a geo-cultural “sense of place”, in this case taken beyond its extremes so as to become its own separate ideology, with catastrophic consequence.

This overdriven form of nationalism, which can be thought of as its underlying tenets being stretched out beyond their conceptual limits and breaking apart into a separate extremist sphere, is commonly known as either extreme nationalism or ultranationalism.⁴⁵ What any extremist ideology or group have in common are a few set principles, such as the opposition to any compromise, being intolerant of dissent, and being focused on the eradication of an enemy in fundamental opposition to it.⁴⁶ As such, the “only relevant difference between extremist and moderate methods [is that] of competition”, which is to say that what separates extremist from more moderate groups or movements is that in the extremist camp “there are no moral constraints or ‘norms’ that might constrain the use of violence to achieve political ends”.⁴⁷ Taken all together then, it is clear that through what constitutes the very meaning of extremism itself, an extreme form of nearly any ideology including nationalism will inherently give rise to an intractable and uncompromising drive towards the ideological elimination of ‘the enemy’, thus creating a situation where the ends justify any and all means including, or perhaps especially, violence.

⁴¹ Ole Magnus Theisen, “Blood and Soil? Resource Scarcity and Internal Armed Conflict Revisited,” *Journal of Peace Research* 45, no. 6 (November 1, 2008): 815, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343308096157>.

⁴² “The Holocaust Encyclopedia - How Many People Did the Nazis Murder?,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, September 26, 2023, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/documenting-numbers-of-victims-of-the-holocaust-and-nazi-persecution>.

⁴³ Lennart Lens, “The Forgotten Holocaust: The Systematic Genocide on the Slavic People by the Nazis during the Second World War” (Universiteit Leiden, 2019), <https://web.archive.org/web/20210625154049/https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/75106>.

⁴⁴ A. V. Sreenivas, “Darwinism, Organic Theory Of State And Lebensraum,” *Webology* 19, no. 2 (2022): 3475.

⁴⁵ In cases such as this, Wikipedia can provide a fairly robust sense of what can be said to constitute a ‘common understanding’ of a concept, see “Ultrnationalism,” in *Wikipedia*, April 13, 2024, <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ultrnationalism&oldid=1218706793>.

⁴⁶ Ronald Wintrobe, ed., “The Problem of Extremism,” in *Rational Extremism: The Political Economy of Radicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 5, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511511028.001>.

⁴⁷ Ronald Wintrobe, ed., “Summary of Propositions and Policy Implications,” in *Rational Extremism: The Political Economy of Radicalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 247, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511511028.010>.

Subsequently, it is not nationalism itself that is responsible for mass murder, any more than religion is for Islamic jihad or Christian crusades, instead, it is extremism. This also harkens back to our earlier argument as to religion, which is to say this paper sees greater explanatory force in seeing religion as a cultural tool (specific to discussions of nationalism), and therefore taking religion, culture, or kin-group beyond their limits and into the extreme (such as religious extremism or ultranationalism), is to result in the arrival at the same ideological destination regardless of apparent route taken, and then with catastrophic effect.

At the same time achieving ultranationalistic aims may seemingly require the attacking and dismantling of the targets own sense of nationalism, which would then paint nationalism as a countervailing force against ultranationalism itself (showing that both concepts are then actually in fundamental opposition to each other). This view can perhaps be seen in the following articulation expressed by a Nazi propagandist on how to defeat a targeted nation:

Deprive the people of their national consciousness, treat them as a tribe and not a nation, dilute their national pride, do not teach their history, propagate their language as inferior, imply they have a cultural void, emphasise their customs are primitive, and dismiss independence as a barbaric anomaly” (ascribed to Reinhard Heydrich, a propagandist within the Nazi Gestapo said to have been stated in the lead up to the annexation of what is now Czechia).⁴⁸

The concept of nationalism then, and of national will, have been identified as a key component in effectively resisting tyrannical or authoritarian elements, particularly in this case where the intent was the eradication of entire national groups consisting of millions of people.

⁴⁸ Stuart McHardy, *Scotland's Future Culture: Recalibrating a Nation's Identity* (Luath Press Ltd, 2017).

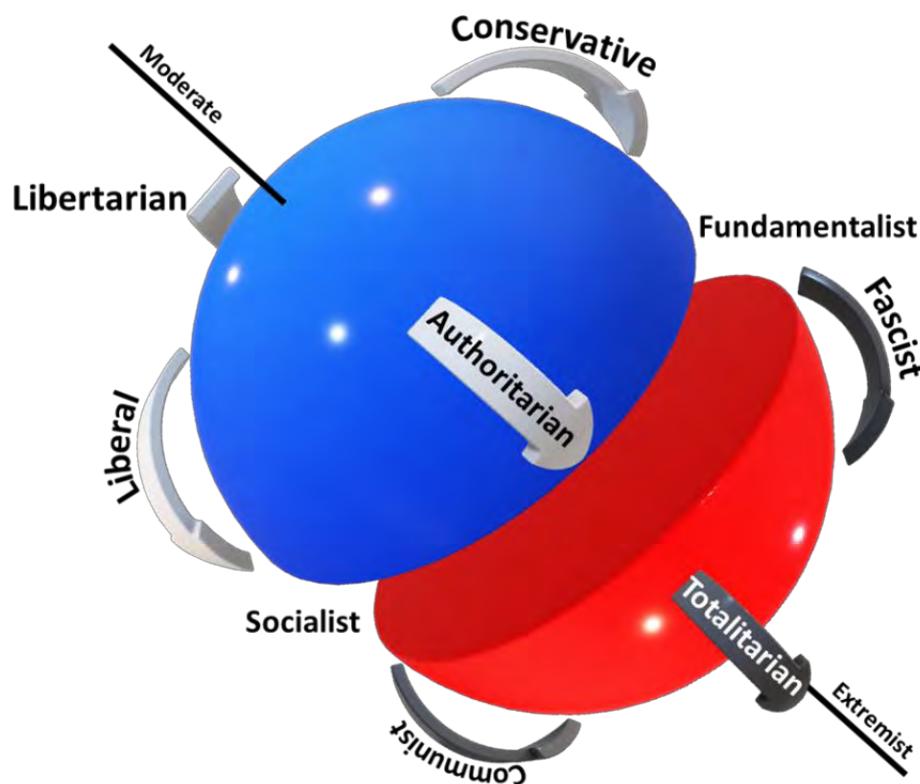


Figure 5 – An example political spectrum plotting extremism as a separate ideological (hemi) sphere.⁴⁹

The idea of national identity as a key enabler of stability and survival while at the same time being a primary force behind genocidal movements creates a contradiction, however, this contradiction is resolved if extremism itself is seen as a separate sphere of the collective ideological geography (depicted here as the red hemisphere in Figure 5). Subsequently, it is not so much nationalism pitted against nationalism, but nationalism against extremism (or more specifically here, as a countervailing force against ultranationalism).

SECTION 4: A CANADIAN NATION?

The quintessential response to the question of Canadian national identity is likely to involve tropes such as the Canadian national character revolving around playing hockey, maple syrup, rugged outdoors people and lumberjacks, igloos, and so on. However, these characterizations are simply that. For example, there was an average of roughly 468,000 active

⁴⁹ Author's own work with the blue hemisphere using the Nolan political spectrum. As can be seen, the two hemispheres are broken apart showing that a concept can only be stretched so far, and so it is this 'breaking point' that represents the 'red line' of crossing into the conceptually separate and distinct sphere of extremism. This also then shows that the 'degree of approach' (which is to say any one of the 360 degrees from the moderate pole) is irrelevant to the fact of existing at the extremist pole. Or in other words, the degree of purported approach is irrelevant as the result is existing within the extremist sphere regardless of how one appeared there. And so, any attempt at tracing a line derived from a moderate position is disingenuous.

ice hockey players in Canada over the years from 2020 to 2023,⁵⁰ representing approximately 1% of the population.⁵¹ In other words, the image of a country of hockey players doesn't apply to around 99% of Canadians, and the same is almost certainly true for number of lumberjacks or those overnighiting in igloos. Even on more serious national narratives, such as that of the "founding nations", of bilingualism, and a national heritage being fundamentally British in character encapsulated in Canada's Constitutional preamble (being "similar in Principle to that of the United Kingdom") have not been true for decades and in fact explicitly rejected.⁵²

In this way, one could ask a series of questions along the lines of 'Do Canadians...' and likely be hard pressed to achieve a consistent or widely accepted national narrative. For example, is Canada a Christian Country? What do Canadians look like? Do Canadians speak French? Do Canadians wear turbans? What is Canadian food? What is the Canadian architectural style? What is Canadian national dress? Canadian music? And so on, will likely result in a lot of equivocation or 'yes, but...' type answers. Contrast this with something like, Japan, and the answers to many of those questions likely rapidly and concretely appear in one's mind (whether it be language, music, architecture, food, etc.).

In other words, what constitutes a uniquely Canadian group united by common cultural descent or understanding? More importantly, what then binds Canadians together and then subsequently, what would Canadians fight for? When one looks at countries like Israel or Ukraine and see large influxes of diaspora groups and others flocking in to join their armies to defend those countries, one could ask if the same would occur in a hypothetical scenario where Canada was instead in a similar position. It would be reasonable to explore then, the question of if a country desires to explicitly reject the very concept of nationality itself, and to achieve the realization of a state with "no core identity, no mainstream", then what will replace it? How can a population identify itself as a population without any uniquely Canadian "core identity" or shared "mainstream" sense of what Canada even is? As Quincy De Vries outlines in an article for *Varsity*, "In my search for an answer to this question, I turned to some well-known Canadian citizens. Surely, they must have a unanimous explanation. But, to my frustration, they all had different answers", and so "as I continued to ponder what it meant to

⁵⁰ "Registered Ice Hockey Players in Canada 2023," Statista, accessed May 6, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/282125/number-of-registered-ice-hockey-players-in-canada/>.

⁵¹ Natural Resources Canada, "Winter Sports Participation: Ice Hockey Participation Rates - Open Government Portal," Open Canada, accessed May 7, 2024, <https://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/f0550a70-8893-11e0-ba9f-6cf049291510>.

⁵² This itself is a contested area, however, one could argue that Canada was both explicitly and implicitly British (for example, Canadian Citizenship didn't exist until 1947, prior to that all Canadians were British subjects, and roughly half of all Canadian soldiers during the Second World War were born in the United Kingdom). However, beginning in the 1960s we see the rise of official state biculturalism (and associated bilingualism) acknowledging the "two founding nations" of the British and the French. This narrative was later officially rejected in favour of "multiculturalism" which was then enshrined within the 1982 Constitution. As Section 27 of the *Charter* states that it "shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians", and therefore Canada as a British nation, as an Anglo-French nation, or even as a European nation, have all been explicitly rejected in favour of Canada as a multinational state. Post-nationalism can be seen then as the logical conclusion at the end of the arc from uni-nationality, to bi-nationality, and then to multi-nationality.

be Canadian, I was struck by the simple fact that I was not going to find an answer”, with their conclusion essentially being that Canada’s sole defining trait was to be united in disunity.⁵³

SECTION 5: CAN A POST-NATIONAL STATE EVER TRULY EXIST?

The concept of a population group united by a common identity predicated on some semblance of shared ethnocultural understanding and existing within a shared territory has historically been something fundamental to the human condition. If one were to do away with the powerful bonding structures that are a shared national identity, one could easily then surmise that it would have to be replaced with something at least equally as strong. To date, particularly in the Canadian context, there has been no official proposals or plan for the post-national state, which is to say, what nationalism is expected to be replaced with is an unanswered question.

One potential idea could be that of the adoption of a plurinational model which is not rooted in the conceptualization of a state being the territorial polity of a single nation (like, let’s say, Japan), or of a multinational state consisting of several nationalities each with their own territory (such as the United Kingdom), but instead consists of a more dispersed set of different nationalities, and indeed, allowing for individual people possessing multiple nationalities concurrently in varying degrees and in varying situations. As Professor Michael Keating puts it:

Plurinationalism is more than multinationalism, which could refer to the coexistence of discrete and separate national groupings within a polity. Under plurinationalism, more than one national identity can pertain to a single group or even an individual, opening the possibility of multiple nationalities which in turn may be nested or may overlap in less tidy ways. The very meaning of nationality can vary according to the group or individual and can be more or less charged with political content. From this we can explore concepts such as the plurinational state and the possibilities of democracy in a plurinational order.⁵⁴

That said, the term “plurinationalism” has a very specific meaning in certain other contexts, such as in Ecuador and Bolivia where both constitutions have recently been adopted declaring them to be plurinational states, which in practice means “states with multiple indigenous nations” and which creates “provisions for forming autonomous indigenous municipalities”.⁵⁵ However, in practice it is not clear what this would mean in terms of providing for a ‘Canadian nationality’ if any, or how that would be achieved, in addition to questions surrounding nations’ rights to self determination particularly for indigenous nations and how that would fit within the wider framework. Canada has also been set up as a federation not of

⁵³ Quicy De Vries, “What Does It Mean to Be Canadian?,” Varsity Online, December 22, 2021, <https://www.varsity.co.uk/features/22636>.

⁵⁴ Michael Keating, “Nations and Sovereignty,” in *Plurinational Democracy: Stateless Nations in a Post-Sovereignty Era*, ed. Michael Keating (Oxford University Press, 2001), 27, <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199240760.003.0001>.

⁵⁵ Aslak-Antti Oksanen, “The Rise of Indigenous (Pluri-)Nationalism: The Case of the Sámi People,” *Sociology* 54, no. 6 (December 1, 2020): 1144, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520943105>.

nations but of co-equal provinces, as at first a binational state and then a multinational one (French, British, and the over 630 First Nations of Canada representing the “founding nations”), a multicultural state, and a bilingual state, making forming any clear delineations and reconciling the competing claims, narratives, and permutations a daunting task.

Even when focusing exclusively on the issue of aboriginal self-government in Canada, this area is rife with contradictions. For example, a critical point of view could see this as establishing rights based on genetic inheritance which “violate the preference that nations be based on territory rather than ethnic descent” in the modern Western conceptualization.⁵⁶ However, these concerns could perhaps be misplaced depending on what is the nature of self-determination or sovereignty being sought, or in other words, can group rights in this area be achieved without conflicting with those of other groups, or of those of the individual. If we were to truly accept the idea of an unlimited plurinational state as close in line with the sentiments underlying the expression of a “post-national” policy, it likely then becomes exponentially more complicated as you are no longer trying to reconcile the national identities and territoriality of 630 first nations, but also potentially of every single nation on earth who have groups who then choose to make Canada their home. Finally, even the idea of the plurinational state is still predicated upon the existence of national identity regardless, just now in multiplicity, so it seems that a truly post-national state remains an elusive if not impossible goal.

CONCLUSION

While language, class, and religion undeniably play a powerful role in shaping societal identities, this paper explores the concept of nationality as perhaps a more fundamental driver with the potential for a higher degree of explanatory force. The primordial human desire for safety, security, and belonging, and fundamentally of a *sense of place* are made manifest through the forming of national groups and thus translates on a larger scale into the idea of the nation and of the state.

Nationality, with its sense of shared ethnocultural descent overlaid onto a defined territory provides a framework for the harnessing together of a group of people into a single cohesive body providing a mechanism for unity and for strength, of resources, and thus underpinning the need to ‘survive and thrive’ within a global wilderness. This, in turn, drives the development of the idea of the sovereign and of sovereignty and the state acting as individual legal persons engaged in international relations, protecting their people from external threat, and a sense of agency and of self-determination. Though also inherently exclusionary and thus ripe for danger, abuse, and even for war itself, nationality also provides a powerful foundation for the building of societies and shaping their place within the world.

The Canadian government’s pronouncement and policies show a desire to deliberately move away from the traditional narratives and symbols of nationality, and instead aspires to be the first truly “post-national” state, and so subsequently the very concept of national security itself would require redefinition as the traditional notions of national values, core identity, and

⁵⁶ Michael Keating, “Plurinational Democracy,” in *Plurinational Democracy: Stateless Nations in a Post-Sovereignty Era*, ed. Michael Keating (Oxford University Press, 2001), 166, <https://doi.org/10.1093/0199240760.003.0006>.

of interests become untethered given the lack of any national moorings. This idea of post-nationalism presents a unique challenge as no existing model for national security within a post-national state exists, and while this paper acknowledges the perhaps overly ambitious nature of any attempt at definitively resolving the complex and tangled issues of Canadian identity and security, it has aimed to at least explore and illuminate some of the conceptual underpinnings of nationalism and thereby post-nationalism, and its potential impacts on national security as a concept. Some areas for further exploration are how the idea of security threats can be reframed in a post-national context, the potential role of humanism and universal human values in fostering a sense of security not reliant upon the 'box' represented by national borders, and the emergence of alternative frameworks with the potential to transcend the idea of the nation-state altogether, such as perhaps, a new concept building on that of plurinationality.

Canada's post-national experiment, if successful, could pave the way for a new understanding of security and of nationality itself. However, the risks associated with such an ideological approach merit careful consideration as uprooting national identity and placing it into the dustbin of history, particularly without any framework of at least equal strength to replace it, could lead to social fragmentation, the weakening of shared identity and of collective responsibility, and a breakdown in state cohesion. Ultimately, the question of post-national security in a post-national Canada remains an open question, and this paper aimed to spark further discourse and exploration of this uncharted and deeply complex territory.

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