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Identity and Territory: Geographical Perspectives on Nationalism and Regionalism

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Abstract. Group politico-territorial identities are potent realities in our fragile world, yet geographers have all but ignored them. Elements and processes involved in recognizing such territorially bound identities are discussed, with a stress on questions of scale and perception. The "legitimacy" of a group politico-territorial identity depends upon the scale of abstraction and upon the definer's perspective. The main problem lies in defining nation. At one level of abstraction, a nation is only a regionalism, yet many groups accept the concept of nation as fact. To appreciate the interplay between these points, several related concepts are also discussed. Some problems connected with group allegiances and orientations are identified. The paper concludes by briefly identifying different responses to the question of whether groups with distinct territorially based identities should have the right to separate territorial and political independence and by challenging geographers to become aware of such identities.

Key Words: identity, territory, state, nation, regionalism, nationalism, plural society, ethnic separatism, self-determination.

Ours is a cultural world in the sense that there are countless numbers of groups that find confidence and guidance from the fact that they each have a separate sense of being, of distinctiveness, which is largely derived from and indeed can be summed up by what we call "culture." But ours is also a political world, with political "interference" having caused the earth to be partitioned in ways that often make no sense from a cultural perspective. Many groups of people are united, at one level of generalization, simply because the bounding of territory has forced them to belong to integrated (or integrating) systems, the principal political limits of which are represented by the international boundaries of states.

In some general works by political geographers lip service is given to the emotional bonds of group to politico-territorial identities, generally defined loosely as the nation or nation-state, but remarkably little has been done beyond this. Rather than quickly bypassing such bonds of group as being of little importance, we should focus further attention on the theme for, by so doing, we come into touch with one of mankind's continuing problems, that of how best to give political recognition to these identities. It is an old issue, which continues to give rise to conflict. It is also a difficult one to tackle, for clear definitions are not always possible to arrive at because it depends upon the scale of abstraction and on the perspective from which one looks upon a group's politico-territorial identity as to whether or not one recognizes it as being "legitimate." The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to remind geographers of a critical but elusive issue. Accordingly, the paper identifies some of the elements and processes involved in the recognition of group politico-territorial identities, explores the problem of definitions, and discusses several key concepts and related problems. Some problems connected with group allegiances and orientations are identified.

The scope of this topic is large, hence much of what is written here is in telegraphic form, intending to suggest rather than be definitive, to highlight rather than to delve in
depth into the concepts and processes identified. The paper aims at generality, in part based on particularity. In a general and philosophical paper like this an author opens himself to criticism for presenting abstractions that might almost seem timeless or placeless. It is hoped, however, that the degree of generalization reached here will help pose questions that can be tested in particular situations. Although this discussion draws upon a range of disciplines, the thrust remains territorial; thus certain related political, economic, and social elements knowingly have had to be dealt with quickly or ignored. Some of the material is generated from a personal knowledge of certain processes and events in particular regions, but the remainder comes from readings and reflection. The reader is invited to search for supporting evidence as well as exceptions and contradictions that come from other times and other places.

Territorial Attachments and Societal Scale

We live out our lives within politically defined territorial units, but much of our existence relates to territorial organizations that are far removed from the personal level and yet often influence us quite directly. As an illustration of one possible hierarchy let us note the case in Canada. Within Ontario, for example, rural townships and counties as well as towns and cities are delimited, and within their bounds certain “rules” exist that may differ from those found in neighboring municipalities. In some regions several municipalities are bound together as “regional municipalities.” At a higher level of territorial organization provinces exist and, again, different sets of regulations exist within them. Ten provinces and two territories are grouped together under a national government with its set of rules because, as a federation, Canada has some powers that lie only in the hands of the federal government. Canada is linked supranationally in various ways by cross-national affiliations and, as with almost all politically independent states, Canada is represented in the United Nations. There is a hierarchy. Although this is just an example, and different kinds of territorial organizations exist in other parts of the world, almost all human territorial organizations—be they political, social, or economic—generally involve the concepts of rank and hierarchy, which vary in complexity according to changing scales and perceptual frameworks (Ad Hoc Committee on Geography 1965; Sack 1981; Gold 1982).

Common sense tells us that we have ties to different scales of territory and that we can operate at several levels of abstraction at any one time—from personal to small group, to a parochial localism (perhaps at a neighborhood, village, town, or city scale), to a broader regionalism, possibly to a nationalism, and maybe even to an internationalism (Lowenthal 1961; Saarinen 1976). Anthropological and cultural geographical studies tell us, however, that there are still many people on earth whose world view rarely extends beyond the limits of their village or regional settlement system, so the above statements regarding extensions of attachments to place to an internationalism must be taken as having less than universal applicability. But whatever our reference levels, we have the astonishing ability to “flick a switch” in our minds and change levels of abstraction. Our personal sense of “place,” as defined at any of the above levels of abstraction, has a territorial component. The personal perspective is not discussed in this paper; rather, focus is placed on large group identity and territorial elements thereof.¹

Differences in the meaning of society can be discussed in terms of scale (Barth 1978). Godfrey and Monica Wilson (1945, p. 25) defined societal scale as “the number of people in relation and the intensity of these relations.” They wrote that comparatively few people are in close relations in old societies, the characteristics of which are correlates of the societies’ smallness of scale. In contrast, suggested the Wilsons, many people are in close relations in modern societies, the characteristics of which are correlates of the societies’ largeness of scale. To be a large-scale society implies that the people are in conscious relations with one another, with a sense of identity that goes far beyond that of a small-scale society. The Wilsons felt that many societies in knowledgeable contact combine to make “community”; thus, writing in the mid-1940s, they observed the following:
Taking England as the point of reference, community now extends geographically over practically the whole world—only a few remote tribes, such as those in Central New Guinea and on the Amazon, are excluded from it. . . . Central Africa, though not yet in as close relations with the outside world . . . as in England, is already within the circle of universal community (Wilson and Wilson 1945, p. 37).

Universal community? To a degree, universal community has today been reached, as evidenced by the United Nations, but the world community has not achieved an equilibrium that assures the peaceful and coherent continuation of existence of such a global scale of society. Even with the earnest attempts that have been made, various forms of parochialism cut against the grain of cooperation. For instance, by the early 1970s United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim had expressed concern about the centrifugal tendencies of organizations within and outside the United Nations (An- demicael 1979, p. xv.) Regional and interregional organizations now exist, as the world moves toward a new economic order; but they, like the United Nations itself, are fraught with identity problems, the root cause being national identities, which are often placed on a higher plane than those relating to larger-scale societies, be they at world regional or global scales. What the Wilsons wrote nearly four decades ago seems still to be true:

A civilized man who puts his town or his family before his state would be judged wrong by his fellows, though one who put his state before some wider group is still usually judged to be right (Wilson and Wilson 1945, p. 41).

There have been large empires in the past, but people's identification with them is in doubt. Certainly, for some, as in Roman times when people could purchase citizenship, or as in the recent British Empire, there undoubtedly was the opportunity for a positive identification. For the majority of people in empires, however, the "local" society would still have been the most significant. And with the decline and break-up of empires, group territorial identities were necessarily brought back to those of more local, small-scale societies.

In terms of human history, both unification and fragmentation of territory have been persistent thrusts, each tendency always being present, but with one or the other being stronger at different times and places. Ernest Gellner (1973) suggests that fragmentation was the accepted element of the past, with enormous empires being eccentric, whereas today it is the large and effective units that seem natural and the "breakdown and fragmentation" tendency that has become eccentric. This latter point is, of course, open to debate, for it depends upon whether or not one accepts the state as it is currently structured as the ultimate expression of one's group politico-territorial identity.

From Group to Territory

In ancient and medieval times in Europe and elsewhere (and still in many areas of the Third World), people's primary large-group loyalties were to the clan or tribe. People were defined by the social group into which they were born, and their territory could (and in places still can) be understood only in terms of "social relations and the juxtaposition of social groups" (Bohannan 1964, p. 176). There was a close territorial identification by the group, with land ownership and division also being closely related to group social identity and organization. By contrast, in modern Western societies and increasingly in areas penetrated by Western ideas, land in its territorial connotation is now seen to be a commodity to be bought and sold, generally—but not entirely—apart from considerations of social relations. Even so, people in Western societies also can have powerful bonds to territory.

Brushing over a complex set of processes that have occurred in different ways in different parts of the world over several centuries, we can note that the concept of "nation" has come to signify the dominant social grouping. This is so because, as nationalist historian Boyd Shafer (1955, p. 97) has suggested, people determined that they might live in groupings larger than family and tribe, although they could not comprehend an international or universal state. In parallel with this came a change in the group-to-territory relationship. Whereas a socially cohesive group once defined its territory, in time the politically bounded territory came to define the people; there was a transference in emphasis from group to territory. Historian Maine put it
for Englishmen as follows: "England was once the country in which Englishmen lived: Englishmen are now the people who inhabit England" (cited in Jones 1966, p. 56). In that case, people from different parts of the country came to develop a sense of belonging to a territorial unit larger than just their more immediate regional societies and, in turn, the territorial extent of that larger unit, England, came to define who they were. This new territorial definition of group gave rise to another concept, that of nation-state. Before discussing the concepts of nation and nation-state, we need first to establish what is meant by "state" and "territory."

The state, a legal and physical entity, with an effective system of government, is a bounded container for the contents of a particular area, which includes the people, resources, and a means for communication and movement. The state is also "the chief custodian of overall social order; it is monitor, comptroller, arbitrator" (Greer and Orleans 1964, p. 810). The experience of statehood is not new, for "states" have existed for centuries in many parts of the world. From an historical perspective we can define "state" as a large but generally compact area under the rule of one dynasty—probably with tributary areas beyond the core area with subrulers who may or may not be related to the principal ruler. This definition should be wide enough to include the tremendous variety of "states" that have existed in the past and that have been classified and discussed in many ways.

The modern concept of state is more rigid, involving several basic characteristics, which Glassner and de Blij (1980, pp. 43–44) have identified as land territory, permanent resident population, government, organized economy, circulation system, sovereignty, and recognition. The modern state became, to use John Herz's phrase, a "hard shell" toward its external environment, although Herz noted too that technological developments have enabled belligerents to leap over or bypass the traditional hard-shell defense of states (Herz 1957).

The concept of territory is involved in every type of system of political organization. It is appropriate to focus on this concept. Territory is area that is bounded, formally or informally. Its contents include terrain, flora and fauna, resources, and human inhabitants and their ways of life. In a sense, territory is not; it becomes, for territory itself is passive, and it is human beliefs and actions that give territory meaning. Not everyone would accept this statement, for many people "see" meaning in or "obtain" meaning from territory and the landscape within it, fully believing in the territory and its landscape as living entities that are filled with meaning. We need only refer to the literature on myth and symbol to see this (Eliade 1961; Tuan 1974; Tuan 1979; Sack 1976). We can suggest, however, that such beliefs are all psychologically and culturally based, and therefore that such meanings really exist only in the mind, although any group's cultural ecology and spatial pattern are powerfully influenced by beliefs. "Geographies of the mind" can and do find expression in the way space is structured; landscapes as perceived by the occupants can have powerful symbolic links to a group's territorial identity.

In addition to symbolic links, however, we can ask, what does territory provide? Political geographer Jean Gottmann (1973) has suggested that territory, when delimited with a system of government that has effective control over it, provides both security and opportunity for those who live within its bounds. This suggestion deserves some elaboration. From the perspective of security there is an inward-looking Platonic ideal (with isolated territory, self-sufficiency, and a stress on protection against physical attack and against the taking of scarce resources by others), whereas from the perspective of opportunity the Aristotelian position holds that there should be an outward orientation (with participation in a larger, perhaps international, system)—security as an isolated community, opportunity as part of a larger whole. Stress is caused by these two contradictory dimensions of territory, elements of both always being present; perhaps states are further along the continuum toward one extreme or the other at different times.

Regionalism as Identity

No matter whether a state is more "inward" or "outward" looking in its external relations, the state as an entity is area, structure, and
content. But, clearly, there is much more than just this, for the people who inhabit the state will have a sense of belonging. The problem arises when we ask, a sense of belonging at what scale of generalization, and (obviously related) to what extent of territory? Is it to Bavaria, Hanover, Schleswig-Holstein, or to West Germany? To Waikato, Otago, Westland, or to New Zealand? To the Bamangwato, the Bangwaketse, the Batlokwa, or to the Batswana? A switch has just been made! Regions were cited for Germany and New Zealand whereas for Botswana the emphasis was shifted to groups of people: in the latter case several tribal names were listed before the “global” name for all citizens of the state was given. For the tribal groups in Botswana, people were once identified principally by kinship ties, and their territory was defined essentially by where the people lived and what lands they used. Today, theoretically, the people are all defined at a higher level of abstraction by the state within which they live, the areal extent of that state being considerably larger than the combined area belonging to the eight major tribes. Of course, groups of people also have attachments to the West German and New Zealand regions noted above, even though the historical and sociopolitical reasons for their attachments differ from those for the people in Botswana. These different kinds of substate territorial attachments, whether in New Zealand, Botswana, West Germany, or anywhere else, might be referred to as regionalisms, and they can have an impact on political systems.

Regionalism is taken to mean the awareness of togetherness among a people of a relatively large area. A regionalism becomes evident only at certain scales of abstraction, at certain scales of generalization. A regionalism thus is recognizable only when it represents but a part of a larger territorial unit, the latter being the areal extent of a political system. To expand on this, let us briefly examine the case of Britain.

Britain is often presented as a good example of a “nation-state,” but we know that four major culture groups exist within the state, each group possessing attributes of nationhood and reflecting a measure of distinctive identity that is associated with a particular territory. At one scale of generalization, the distinctive consciousness that exists within Scotland, for instance, is only a regionalism, if viewed from a Britain-wide perspective; but, naturally, Scottish nationalists claim it to be much more. For the latter, their “regionalism” is a “nationalism” rooted in place, that place being the territorial extent of Scotland, wherein the Scots’ nation and state are said to coincide. The key element that Scottish nationalists want is sovereignty, for although one of the many attributes of nationalism is having or coveting a territory, sovereignty means actually controlling the territory. Sovereignty is desired by nationalists so that their government can best protect their community’s interests. Sovereignty, therefore, should be regarded as a means to an end, not an end in itself.

The Scottish nationalists’ identity, as with those of English, Irish, and Welsh nationalists, was created long ago. During the nineteenth century a larger more abstract sense of British national consciousness developed, to which many Scots and Welsh, and perhaps some Irish, became attached, but not at the total loss of their lower-level attachments. Hugh Seton-Watson has argued that a distinct “English” sense of national consciousness merged into being “British,” which included the Scots and others but which the English tended to appropriate unto themselves with little or no positive acknowledgment of the Welsh, Scots, or Irish as distinctive elements of the whole (Seton-Watson 1977, p. 34). It can be further argued that there never was the need for an English nationalism as such as there was and is for the Scots and Welsh, who once more increasingly see themselves as being more than just “British.” The same issue of identity exists for people in Northern Ireland, but it is more complicated there because of the debate over whether or not there are two nations—an Ulster nation and an Irish nation (Anderson 1980; Boal 1980; Perrons 1980; Pringle 1980).

**Nation and Nationalism**

Although the origin of the Western concept of nation goes back several centuries, it was during the eighteenth century that people in the middle classes in Western Europe and North America came increasingly to identify...
with the feeling that the “nation” belonged to them. The two oldest examples of modern national consciousness are the French and the English. Interestingly, the development of both nations more or less coincided with the growth and consolidation of those states during the same period. Key factors in the development of national consciousness can be found for every nation, but that is not the issue for the moment. Of greater importance is the set of ideas that emerged as a doctrine during the eighteenth century calling for the freedom of all men. Moreover, the notion “was advanced that every nation should be allowed to elaborate its own system of laws” (Gottmann 1973, p. 72). This doctrine later became known as self-determination. At that time there was, according to Shafer, “a rising consciousness of national unity at the same time as other entities and distinctions such as those of privilege and province tended to disappear” (Shafer 1955, p. 105, my stress).

The American and French revolutions gave credence to the idea of national sovereignty over the inhabited territory where jurisdiction was claimed in the name of the body politic. In a sense, a popular sovereignty was created. In the United States and France the old regimes were overthrown by revolutionary actions, and the power came into the hands of the people as a nation, or, at least, to those who claimed to speak for the nation. The course of world history thereafter was altered, and during the past two hundred years there have been hundreds of territorial changes. Many of the latter have been due to changes in international balances of power and the exercising of military might, and other changes have occurred because of the claiming of colonial territories. In recent decades, however, dozens of transitions have been made from colonial status to political independence under the guiding principle of self-determination.

The many recent territorial changes that have resulted in the creation of numerous new states are not a signal that we have arrived at the end of any kind of “evolutionary ladder” of territory formation, however, for we should fully expect territorial changes to continue. We can ask the following question: By considering existing states from the perspective of group territorial identities, can we get any clues as to what some of these changes might be, that is, changes beyond those that might result from a major war between world powers?

In Western Europe the nation essentially filled out the bounds of existing states, and the combining of “state” and “nation” led to the development of the concept of a single nationality in a nation-state. The nation-state became the ultimate political expression of a people. In Central and Eastern Europe “the nation was defined as a cultural rather than a political entity,” although once nationhood was achieved in those regions the concept of nation-state came more or less to approximate that found in Western Europe (Pflanze 1966, p. 40; also Graham E. Smith 1979). In the non-Western world, where many territories were claimed by colonizing Europeans, the concept of nation-state was held up as a model to be emulated; thus efforts were and are being made to formulate national identities that transcend lower-level “ethnic” attachments. However, in much of Africa, for instance, the very idea of nation carries with it the ever-present centrifugal threat of tribal attachments, that is, of small-scale society identities. “Tribalism” is blamed for any expression of desire by regional groups for either a degree of autonomy or even simple political recognition, quite apart from any claims for separate statehood. In many instances in Africa, the hope for successfully achieving a sense of nation seems slim.

The doctrine of self-determination that emerged two hundred years ago became part and parcel with the concept of nationalism. Numerous definitions exist to convey the meaning of nationalism, none of which is entirely satisfactory. Hayes (1931, p. 25) suggested that nationalism is a sentiment in which patriotism is fused with nationality, whereas Shafer (1972, p. 17) noted that there is “a belief that an individual should be loyal to his nation, its land, its values, and its state.” Kedourie (1960, pp. 73–74) suggested that nationalism “pretends to supply a criterion for the determination of the unit of population proper to enjoy a government exclusively of its own, for the legitimate exercise of power in the state, and for the right organization of a society of states. Briefly, the doctrine holds that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be as-
certained, and that the only legitimate type of government is self-government."

This conclusion still begs the fundamental question: What scale of population is proper to enjoy a government exclusively of its own? Reading a wide range of interdisciplinary literature does not help answer the question, for few scholars seem willing to indicate categorically that a certain scale of society is superior to all others. Though this is undoubtedly wise, nevertheless, there is the underlying assumption by most writers that the concept of state, and the currently existing system of states, is a given.16 Perhaps the general thinking is akin to the findings of Herz, who, after earlier having discussed universalist thrusts that would lead to the demise of the territorial state as we have known it, later came to conclude that individual states, as part of a global "mosaic of nation-states," have actually been strengthened by recent nationalisms of a self-determining and self-limiting variety that stand in contrast to older expansionist forms of imperialism (Herz 1968; also Herz 1976, pp. 1-56). Does this mean, however, that the "nation-state" is necessarily the ultimate political expression of all group politico-territorial identities? Some writers certainly feel that the existing state system is quite inadequate or else is the cause of many of the world's problems. Thus they call for or anticipate smaller states, that is, those that would in fact be a better areal fit between the concepts of state and nation.17 If we agree, then should not we too call for the fragmentation of political space into increasingly smaller political units, the population of each having the right to self-determination? But why need this be the case? In all plural societies can we not assume that there is at least some degree of common identity and meaning—either negative or positive—for all members of the state, even while there may still be marked identification with regions and communities within the state as well? But are all groups within existing states content with this as a proposition? In many parts of the world the answer is no.

Nationalism and Common Territory

Gottman some time ago suggested that "the most stubborn facts" in relation to the political partitioning of the world "are those of the spirit, not those of the physical world" and that "one of the most stubborn facts of the spirit remains nationalist feeling—at different scales" (Gottman 1951, reprinted in Jackson 1964, p. 27).18 What is meant by this? Is it possible to have substate nationalisms as well as state nationalisms? Perhaps we need to define our terms further.

Cobban (1944, p. 48) said of nation that "any territorial community, the members of which are conscious of themselves as members of a community, and wish to maintain the identity of their community, is a nation." This is a very direct definition, and yet it is also weak, for it does not clearly identify what is meant by community. Perhaps, to approach this matter from another perspective, we can ask if it is enough for people simply to live in a common territory for them to develop a bond? American historian David Potter (1954, p. 15), with reference to "nation," suggested that this question is based upon a circular argument, "for the test of a nation is the existence of the common territory, and the test of whether the territory is common is its position within national limits." However, as Potter noted elsewhere, the political state "can employ the concept of a 'common territory' so persuasively as to create the illusion of commonality for geographically diverse areas" (Potter, 1968, pp. 41-42).

Clearly, common territory by itself is not enough, for there must also be a complex set of other factors that physically, socially, and especially psychologically link the people who live in different parts of that common territory. Thus, for instance, through a whole set of symbols—or iconography, to use Gottmann's (1952a; 1952b) term—people in New York and San Francisco can develop significant bonds simply because they are "Americans" as opposed to being "Canadians" or "Mexicans" (Deutsch 1953). The people of the United States are politically integrated, although we can add that the people need not like each other as individuals, only as fellow Americans. Be that as it may, their group identity is derived from "a relationship of community... held together by mutual ties... which give the group a feeling of identity and awareness" (Jacob and Teune 1964, p. 4). This definition (if we remove it from the concept of political integration for which it was intended) is abstract enough to apply to
all sorts of groups at different scales of generalization. However, there is need to tie such notions of group identity to the concept of nationalism.

Shafer (1980, p. 205), in defining nationalism, listed a series of sentiments that bond people and place, while Kedourie (1960), cited above, saw nationalism as a doctrine of pretense. Both scholars would agree that nationalisms involve myths that relate to and encourage feelings of loyalty to and identification with a group’s consciousness of itself and cause the group either to have or desire political independence under its own government in its own territory. They would undoubtedly also agree that nationalism is a whole complex of ideas, attitudes, events, and political movements. Nationalism is certainly an idea, but it is also a force. The fundamental function of nationalism is the transference of loyalty from kinship groups or local and regional levels to the larger national group. But nationalism is both negative and positive (Hoselitz 1956). The negative aspects define the separateness and exclusiveness of a group and stress antagonism to others. The positive aspects try to give meaning to the communality of interests of a given group and to define the rights of membership in the group of all those who are said to belong to it. The bond of loyalty may involve a concept of past common origin. The key element is the functional relationship, which involves participation. Thus, as suggested above for the United Nations, and as can be seen so clearly with the European Community, the process of shifting loyalties includes both positive and negative consequences similar to those identified for nationalism.

Defining Allegiances and Orientations

Emanuel Marx (1980, p. 15) usefully viewed the nation “as a series of overlapping open systems whose boundaries vary from situation to situation,” but he felt that we can study communities only within the national society rather than the nation itself. The problem with this stance is that if we only examine several distinct communities within the whole, we shall never reach an understanding of what the “nation” really is, for although a nationalism implies a devotion to the total entity called the nation, it is at the same time more than the sum of the devotion to each of the parts. The Japanese have a word for this concept, kokutai, which means the entity over and above the parts. Somehow, then, we need to go beyond the different communities that make up a national society if we are to appreciate the broader concept of nation. The issue becomes more complicated, however, when we realize that if we ignore the many different elements that comprise a national society, then we might be led to assume incorrectly a uniformity of thought. Although Symmons-Symonolewicz (1980, p. 387) noted that “in a modern society national consciousness may differ greatly from one individual or group to another, yet its sweep is basically society-wide,” we still need to become aware of different orientations in terms of priorities of group allegiances.

Sociologist George de Vos (1975, pp. 18–20) suggested that people have priorities in belonging that can give both direction to conflict and accommodation between kinds of group allegiances. These distinctions are useful for our purpose. He identified basically four orientations: present (functional), present (specific), past (familial-cultural), and future (ideological). Individuals can have elements of all these types of group allegiances, but there will be one to which greatest commitment is given. A brief expansion of his thoughts is warranted.

With the present (functional), people’s primary loyalty is to their country. This produces a powerful emotion, patriotism, which can lead them to sacrifice their lives for the “fatherland” or the “motherland,” for survival of the nation is more important than personal survival. The bond of loyalty to the state may involve a concept of past common origin. The key element is the functional relationship, which involves participation. Thus, for instance, Mexican citizenship can be seen to be an assimilative legal concept that defines a vital continuing national identity and is linked to the areal extent of the state, however poorly that territory is understood.

Some members of national societies may have conflicting forms of present-oriented
social belongings, as that which is derived from participating in an occupation. Such a specific (especially occupational) loyalty may lead individuals to act in ways that are or are perceived to be detrimental to the needs and goals of the state. Some scientists, international civil servants with the United Nations or other international bodies, and employees of multinational corporations who may be forced to make or to act upon decisions that are to the economic betterment of the corporations and not necessarily to their state, would serve as examples of this orientation.

A past (familial-cultural) priority of belonging may well tie a group to a specific territory, be it presently occupied or not. If the latter, it once may have been lived in and now desired again. If the territory is in an adjacent country, then in all likelihood there will be conflict. If the territory is already possessed but is located within part of an existing state, and members of the group articulate their loyalty to their “regionalism,” this allegiance will have to be recognized in one way or another (perhaps even purposely ignored) by the larger, or at least dominant, society. Jews in the past, Palestinians today, and Quebecois nationalists would represent possible examples of this orientation.

Individuals dissatisfied with both the past and present orientations may adopt a future (ideological) orientation, attaining a sense of belonging by identification with a cause or revolutionary movement. Such an allegiance that transcends state boundaries may be tested to the extreme if adherents find their own state in conflict with another state, for then the broader ideological commitment may have to be compromised and a primary link reestablished with the state. Some people with this type of future ideological orientation may “denounce” their “national” citizenship and seek the destruction of what is around them, perhaps through acts of violence. The various small terrorist groups in West Germany, Britain, the United States of America, and elsewhere come to mind. It is here assumed that leaders of each of the other types of group allegiance will also have a fairly dominant future orientation as a means of giving direction to what is perceived to be in the best interests of the particular allegiance to which they hold priority of belonging.

In themselves these four identity categories of de Vos are not necessarily spatial in nature, but each has a spatial element that can find expression in subnational, national, and international allegiances. The principal problem lies in trying to classify people into the categories, in part because of intervening variables (such as social class, caste, and religion) that may or may not have a distinct territorial character and that may find expression in a regional manner in elections (Alford 1963; Hechter 1975; Birch 1977). Possibly the easiest of the identity categories to work with would be the present (functional) and past (familial-cultural), by exploring the intellectual and political elites’ notions of why their groups exist. Such concerns are not new to geographers.

Richard Hartshorne (1950) argued that the raison d’être is the most basic centripetal force for any state. Because no state remains static either internally or in its external relations, it is conceivable and indeed perhaps necessary for the reason for existing to be ever changing to meet both the evolving demands of the state’s society and any changing external considerations. Geopolitician Ladis Kristoff (1968) suggested that the raison d’être is supported at two levels, one being a spiritus movens, the national idea, which is “a semi-conscious tendency rooted in the collective psychology of national tradition and inhibitions,” the other being the state idea, which is “a philosophical and moral conception of the state’s destiny and mission in terms of universal human teleology.”

The state idea is generated by the intellectual (and usually political) elite, and it is a political and goal-oriented idea. In contrast, the national idea, which pertains to the broad masses, is more amorphous and less political, being strongly historically based on traditional beliefs and ways of doing things.

Kristoff (1968) examined these distinctions as they applied to “The Russian Image of Russia.” The Indian political geographer, Ramesh Dikshit (1971, p. 115), suggested that the distinctions drawn by Kristoff may not always be true, and he cited the case of India to support his objection. On the other hand, Knight (1974) examined the development of the state idea for a new state, Botswana, in southern Africa, and found the distinctions to have validity. Most interestingly, he found that the state idea formulated for Botswana by the
elites was intentionally linked with traditional ways of doing things—that is, with elements of the national idea—so as to be understandable to the masses. Perhaps more use can be made of Kristoff’s idea as a means for examining the orientation and goals of groups with different kinds of allegiances.

Separate Identities and Territory

There are many instances where groups within societies do not have an attachment to the national territory. Indeed, we find that some groups have sought to separate themselves and their territory from the governing state as a means for defending their separate identities. At different times attempts have been made to achieve separation for portions of Australia (see for instance Whebell (1976)). And, nearby, the peoples of the Pacific islands group known as the Gilbert and Ellice Islands were placed under a common administration by the British, even though the people were racially and culturally different. The Ellice Islanders, who were in the minority, felt that their region was neglected. As the distinctive Ellice Island sense of identity was sharpened, the people became active in seeking independent statehood (MacDonald 1975). And in Papua-New Guinea, a new state in which the peoples (with more than 700 language groups and 10,000 or so tribes) have been called “a nation of minorities,” secessionist tendencies in Bougainville had to be countered by the granting of provincial powers, which had the effect of keeping Bougainville within the state but also further heightened the sense of separateness (Premdas 1977). And in Papua-New Guinea, a new state in which the peoples (with more than 700 language groups and 10,000 or so tribes) have been called “a nation of minorities,” secessionist tendencies in Bougainville had to be countered by the granting of provincial powers, which had the effect of keeping Bougainville within the state but also further heightened the sense of separateness (Premdas 1977). Numerous other instances could be cited from former colonial territories, the most recent being Antigua and Barbuda, which achieved political independence in November 1981, but with the minority Barbudans on the tiny island of Barbuda already contemplating secession out of fear of being dominated by the majority Antiguans.

Deep concerns over potential secessionist threats from numerous distinctive minorities and over the possibility of numerous irredentist claims against their various territories led members of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 to accept that they would recognize the colonially derived but continuing international political boundaries as fixed. Accordingly, the OAU did not recognize Biafra’s attempts to secede from Nigeria, the many attempts by Shaba to secede from Zaire, or Libya’s recent attempts to take over part of Chad. Of course, too, despite good intentions, we find that not all political unions are able to survive, as evidenced by the power of regionalisms and parochialisms that broke apart such modern states as the Central African Federation (de Blij 1962) and the West Indies Federation (Lowenthal 1958; Dale 1962).

The above examples, plus numerous others that could be cited, suggest that Shafer may have been wrong to claim, as noted earlier, that distinctions such as “province” tend to disappear following the rise of nationalism, as the idea of loyalty to the whole nation penetrates and sets aside loyalties to particularist entities within the national state. Even for Western Europe today Shafer’s claim is not fully correct, given that some regionalisms there are very strong. Thus Shafer was perhaps too inclusive in his statement. Clearly, though people can develop attachments at higher levels of abstraction, many will still retain their more local-level attachments as well. Not only did many “regional” identities simply not die following the rise of nationalisms, but in recent decades some have been given a renewed vigor. Many, but not all, such regionalisms have at their base an ethnic consciousness, a consciousness that Connor (1973) referred to as ethn nationalism.
the status of a separate political existence the
goal of the restoration and the social em-
bodyment of that dignity." Symmons-Symonolewicz (1980, p. 387) indicated that "the com-
mon elements shared by both national and ethnic consciousness are the sense of unity
and solidarity, especially in facing other
groups, as well as territorial and cultural
ones." He also observed that "though the
tribal or ethnic territory might be less clearly
perceived in the group's consciousness than
the national territory in the elite-bound na-
tional consciousness, it is still the basic in-
gredient of the group's identity" (Symmons-

Whenever ethnic separatism is linked to
notions of nationalism, it follows that hopes
for territorial separation will be held.23 The
threat of ethnic separation exists to varying
degrees in many modern Western countries
(including Belgium, Britain, Canada, France,
Italy, Spain, U.S.A., and Yugoslavia), but we
can observe the phenomenon elsewhere in
the world too (as in Burma, Ethiopia, Ghana/
Togo, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Malaysia,
Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and so on). Some efforts
to maintain or achieve a separate territorial
existence have already resulted in substantial
dislocations of populations and terrible losses
of human life (as in Bangladesh, Biafra, Eritrea,
Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Philip-
ines). In all such cases, as viewed from the
perspective of the dominant state, the region-
alisms become sectionalisms, whereby the
regional interests are given primacy by the
regional groups over the larger interests of
the state. A motivating force for the elites
of such regional groups is self-determination.

Self-Determination: But At
What Scale?

René Lévesque, Premier of Quebec Pro-
vince, Canada, declared that "self-determi-
ation is an absolute necessity for the growth
to maturity of a society which has its own
identity" (Lévesque 1978, p. 110, my trans-
lation). By saying this, Lévesque raised the
questions of whether he was referring to a
nationalism or something less than this, and
at what scale self-determination is desired.

Self-determination is a concept accepted
by the United Nations. But what is meant by
the term? Political scientist Rupert Emerson
(1960, p. 299) put it simply: "Self-determi-
nation constitutes formal recognition of the
principle that nation and state coincide." At
first, following the French and American
revolutions, international legal doctrine only
slowly recognized the judicial significance
of the concept, but it has gained greater
recognition in our century as international
law has come to be seen to pertain to groups
and individuals and not just to states and
governments. It is now accepted, in theory
at least, that people can no longer be forced
to live under foreign domination and that all
groups have the right to live within their
own territories in external freedom and in-
ternal liberty. Despite this broad perspective,
however, the United Nations has recognized
the principle of self-determination only in
the context of decolonization (Nawaz 1965;
Fawcett 1979; Arangio-Ruiz 1979). The prob-
lem is that the international state system as it
has developed inaccurately reflects cultural
realities. As Emerson (1960, p. 299) put it, "the
plain fact is that the state structure derived
from the past only occasionally and accident-
tally coincided with the national makeup of
the world."

Plural (or multicultural) societies, created
by wars and treaties and by the imposition of
colonial boundaries, are for all practical pur-
poses simply the order of the day. As the age
of colonization is almost over, the question
becomes, should the principle of self-
determination apply to subnational scales?
One problem with this is that although self-
determination may be a sought-after goal for
groups within certain states, notions of na-
tional integrity forbid nationalists of existing
states from acknowledging that self-
determination thrusts by minorities are
legitimate. People generally recognize self-
determination only "elsewhere," that is, out-
side their own state's territory. Thus, for in-
stance, the French may support Quebecois
self-determination but not the claims of the
Bretons, and the Russians may recognize and
even encourage national independence
movements elsewhere but never within their
own territorial bounds. Related to this is the
problem of how a group's politico-territorial
identity is defined, for different perspectives
will result in different answers as to when a
regionalism is a nationalism and vice versa,
and when a nationalist is a separatist or, for
that matter (but from a quite different stance), a colonizer.

In some plural societies federal systems of government give legitimate recognition to regionalisms that might not be recognized within a unitary form of government (Dikshit 1975). Though a federal system of government can permit considerable regional autonomy, there is nevertheless a limit to which regional accommodation can go before disintegration of the state results. Constitutional lawyer A. V. Dicey (1939, p. 602) warned that federalism rests on the psychology of the people of the political units involved such that they desire union without desiring unity. If federalism rests on the psychology of the people, then perhaps we should recall Hartshorne's (1950) conclusion that the most powerful centripetal force for any state is simply the people's belief that the state should exist. To expand upon this, let us consider three questions, as put and answered by Pierre Elliot Trudeau (1965, p. 20):

Why should or why be independent and not Britain? Why Ireland and not Scotland? Why Nicaragua and not Quebec? As we ask ourselves these questions, it becomes apparent that more than language and culture, more than history and geography, even more than force or power, the foundation of the nation is will. For there is no power without will!

Within Canada, for instance, this quotation can be taken by both federalists and separatists alike, who with equal fervor can then shout "right on!" Here we have the basic dilemma that applies to all states with separatist groups. Canada is currently in crisis because of the centrifugal consequences of the power of regionalisms that are centered within different parts of the country and have become entwined with issues involving constitutional change (Knight 1982). The most potent of these regionalisms is located in Quebec, where 40 percent of the eligible voting population is on record as supporting separation from Canada (Burghardt 1980; Williams 1981). Interestingly for the purposes of this paper, and as discussed elsewhere (Knight 1982, p. 267), during the public debates on independence in Quebec since 1979, it has been argued or often simply implied that Quebec as the "state" represents the embodiment of the "nation." In short, the claim is made that there is a "national" Quebec culture. To "belong" to Quebec, therefore, one has also to be part of the "nation." But that is the rub for many people who live within Quebec, Francophones or not, who also have an allegiance to the greater entity called Canada. They thus have ties to two higher levels of politico-territorial abstraction, the province and Canada, the latter being a level of abstraction to which separatists cannot develop an attachment. The drive toward separate state status, that is, sovereignty, by Quebec's separatists is not unique but, as in Scotland, Spain, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere, for the moment at least, only a minority of the people within the territorially defined group identify with the idea of separation from the larger political entity.

One kind of territorially based group identity that Canada has yet to deal fully and fairly with involves indigenous peoples, who feel that their politico-territorial aspirations also deserve to be met. Consistent with the idea of the nation-state as the ideal expression between a people and their land, the indigenous populations are now openly attempting to cement their political foundations by claiming lands (and control of resource development of those lands) that were taken from them when Europeans came to the continent. As with indigenous populations in New Zealand, Australia, and the United States of America, Canada's Native People are experiencing an awakening of older forms of territorial consciousness (but which are now framed within European structures) as they seek to protect their cultural and economic well-being in the face of rapid population increase, technological change, and external cultural threats to their ways of life (Raby 1974). Some of them see themselves as forming "nations." In contrast to the Quebec nationalists, the Dene (Athapaskan Indians) and the Inuit (Eskimo) of Canada's Northwest Territories have called for their "independence and self-determination within the country of Canada," and the partitioning of the Northwest Territories into two new political units (one with an Inuit majority) is foreseen. This instance serves to point up the fact that distinctive group politico-territorial identities can sometimes be accommodated within existing state structures.

One of Lenin's central contributions, according to Boal (1980, p. 43), "was his under-
standing that only freedom to secede makes possible free and voluntary union, association, and cooperation, and, in the long run, fusion between nations." Lessons from history suggest that the freedom to secede is not easily achieved, as evidenced in, for instance, the United States of America last century and Nigeria and Pakistan more recently. And we can note that even though the constitution of the U.S.S.R. recognizes the right of units within the union to secede, there is the harsh reality that the central authority of that state will never let any unit secede. Existing states will always try to prevent secessions, although this will not in itself cause ethnic regionalisms, or subnationalisms, to decline. On the contrary, maybe the denial encourages secessionist movements to grow, as people increase their desire to have their groups’ territorial identities protected by their own governments within their own states.

Conclusion

If territory is regarded as space to which identity is attached by a distinctive group who hold or covet that territory and who desire to have full control of it for the group’s benefit, there is still a fundamental question that must be answered. Should all groups with distinct territorially based identities have the right to separate territorial and political independence? If the answer is “yes,” then should we encourage the “Balkanization” of the world? But what size should the groups be? George Murdock has identified 862 societies—and he knowingly omitted many from his Ethnographic Atlas. Should all these societies be granted separate political territories to which they would have sovereign rights? If the answer is “no,” then should we simply accept the status quo and demand, perhaps through the United Nations, that no further partitioning of territory into national units should occur? But who would listen? Certainly not the many subnational groups who desire sovereign-state status for their “nations”! Or should we hope for ever-increasing supranational regional identities, with the possibility that citizens of the constituent states will attain new identities, identities that might weaken and eventually replace existing state identities? This, too, seems unlikely, for nationalism clearly remains a very potent force, which stands as a contradiction to universality; although both “nationalism” and “universalism” seek to bind people together, the former involves only those who belong to the “nation.” Here we return to the dilemma of how and at what scale to define nation.

The state (and sometimes the nation-state) remains the dominant form of politico-territorial division, and there seems little likelihood that this will change in the near future. But cutting against the grain of the state as we now know it, amidst an ongoing search for a new international economic order, we also find two divergent politico-territorial forces operating: (1) the move toward new supranational unifying forms of linkages and (2) the rise of subnational regional groups that desire to recover past identities or to achieve new levels of “selfhood” never before attained. The desire of many people to return to small-scale societies is undoubtedly part of a revulsion against the increasing cultural uniformity that has come with larger-scale modernizing societies, but it is also related to the desire to have a more direct say in how one’s life is being lived. For some the sense of identity is derived from minority status within a larger society.

Group politico-territorial identities are not only of academic concern, for these identities are not simply passing shadows but are potent realities in our fragile world. The challenge here given to geographers is that they must seek to identify and understand the significance of group politico-territorial identities, at their various scales, and be cognizant of them as they proceed with their studies of related phenomena and processes. As suggested at the outset, by focusing on the issue of group territorial identities, we can come into contact with an age-old problem that remains very much alive, that of how best to give political recognition to these identities. The problem remains unsolved.

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Notes

1. Political geographers have hitherto focused mostly on large group identities through electoral geography. See, for example, Taylor and Johnson (1979). Political geographers have all but neglected the inner workings of political systems wherein group territorial attachments can operate. The most detailed geographical examination of conflicting large group identities (that is, political party affiliations versus territorially based attachments) during a political decision-making process is Knight (1977).

2. With reference to South Asia, Murton (1976, p. 4) noted that “land in its territorial connotation cannot be separated from social organization: among agricultural people in particular, it is difficult to separate man-man and group-group relationships in space from concomitant rights to exploit territory.” See also Soja (1971, especially pp. 9–17).


4. The reader should note that the word “state” is not used in this paper to refer to subunits of a country.

5. For instance, see the work by Krader (1968). An excellent critical examination of the concept of state is Dyson (1980).

6. The literature to support this statement is huge. Ralph Brown delightfully explored his statement that “men at all times have been influenced quite as much by beliefs as by facts” in his classic *Historical Geography of the United States* (Brown 1948, p. 3). An introductory collection of essays on landscape, cultural ecology, and perception of environment is in English and Mayfield (1972, pp. 3–319). A review of some aspects is Knight (1971).

7. Material pertinent to this theme appears in many studies by cultural geographers, including Brookfield and Brown (1963), Waddell (1972), and Hunter (1968). For contrasting views and approaches see the collection of papers by Lowenthal and Bowden (1976) and the paper by Kliot (1982).

8. Schwartz (1974) discusses the challenging question of whether regionalism is a primordial sentiment or is being constantly generated by regional inequalities.


10. For the soundest of historical introductions see Hayes (1931), Kohn (1944), and Shafer (1955, 1972). For sociological perspectives see Symmons-Symonolewicz (1968, 1980, 1982) and Anthony Smith (1971).

11. With many countries critical elements related to the development of a national consciousness may have resulted from external pressures. For example, the “crucible” for New Zealand’s nationalism was the fall of Singapore in 1941, for with that event, so many thousands of miles away, New Zealanders were rudely made aware of the fact that they were not simply an extension of Britain in the South Seas with all protection supplied by the Royal Navy. Subsequently, as perceptions of place altered, a distinctive identity was forged that had a more immediate orientation to the country’s relative location in the southwest Pacific (Knight 1970). In another case, in southern Africa, a trans-tribal sense of being a Motswana—citizen of Botswana—has been greatly aided by the impact on people’s minds of the reality of the international border as a divide between contrasting societies, when the thousands of Batswana laborers cross it to seek work each year in the Republic of South Africa, where they must live and work under the repressive laws of the racist regime (Knight 1975).

12. American anthropologist Ronald Cohen (1978, p. 384), with respect to problems of terminology, noted that “ethical divisions in their [Third World] societies are ‘tribal,’ those in ours are ‘ethnic.’”

13. For example, in Dahomey there are two mutually antagonistic tribes in the south while in the north there are isolated and unassimilated tribal groups, and all of these groups cling to old allegiances and traditions, retaining their senses of historical and cultural distinctiveness and mutual distrust. In this perhaps extreme case, there is a resemblance to Larwin’s “segmented pluralism” or Lijphart’s “closed cultural camps,” with regionalist sentiments and allegiances remaining so strong that national identity is an empty term (Decalo 1973). Even in other African states where societies are not so fractious and where elements of national unity are present, there remains the problem of welding a strong national identity that will in time fully transcend tribal allegiances. In some cases, as in Nigeria, governments have tried to weaken regional and tribal affinities by reconstructing the internal boundaries of the constituent regions as part of a drive to develop national identities. In contrast, after exploring ethnic pluralism in his country, Nigerian geographer Adejuyigbe (1974) concluded that every ethnic nation’s desire to manage its own affairs should be recognized, the people being permitted to participate effectively in government decision making.


15. French geographer Albert Demangeon (1948, p. 865) declared that “it seems that no nation is stable that does not have its roots in the soil.” Perhaps a truer geographical perspective is encompassed in the term “place,” including as it does both specific site and relative locational characteristics.

16. As an aside it must be noted that too many writers also have effectively chosen to neglect—or have taken for granted—the signifi-
20. See especially Kohr (1957) and Schumacher (1974), who felt that the underlying cause of all forms of human misery is bigness.

18. Gottmann (1951) also said that “in a space differentiated already by nature, this diversity of people’s minds, of the spirit of the nations, creates more differentiation” (as reprinted in Jackson 1964, p. 26). For an expansion of his ideas see Gottmann (1973).

19. All nationalisms are self-centered. An interesting cross-cultural perspective of this point can be gained from Preiswerk and Perrot (1978). As another source for understanding this the reader should examine the words of national anthems. On the link between nationalism, conflict, and peace see the thoughtful essay by Shafer (1974).

20. Of previous studies by his disciplinary colleagues, Marx (1980, p. 18) wrote: the major flaw of past studies "was the model of the nation employed. The nation was viewed as a clearly bounded territorial unit. Therefore its subunits also had to be territorial ones, even if it made no sense sociologically."

21. Kristoff (1965, p. 347) noted that the state idea does not quite coincide with the national idea. Of the national idea, he said that it is "essentially an idealized self-image of the nation, the acceptable part of the national culture."


24. Social psychologist Stanley Morse has done several pioneering studies in an attempt to determine how individuals identify with the nation (Morse 1976; Morse, Mann and Nel 1977; Morse 1980). He discovered that his sample of Saskatchewan students had a sense of identification with the Canadian “nation” as part of a "constellation of social attitudes and cognitions" and, importantly, that “regional, subgroup and local attachments in Saskatchewan do not mitigate against, but might even reinforce, attachments to Canada” (Morse, 1980, p. 311). No such work has been completed in Quebec.

25. The quotation is from the “Dene Declaration,” which was passed at the Second Joint General Assembly of the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories and the Metis Association of the Northwest Territories on July 19, 1975, which was held at Fort Simpson, Canada. On the Dene see Watkins (1977), and on the Inuit see Brody (1975). A pertinent review of the situation in northern Canada is by geographer Morisset (1980). For a United States Indian perspective see Ryan (1977).


27. See Shevtsov (1974) for an official explanation of how “state sovereignty” serves to combine the sovereignty of the U.S.S.R. with the sovereignty of the Union Republics. Ethnic minorities in the U.S.S.R. would be interested in knowing that Mr. Brezhnev (1972, p. 17) believes that “the national question, as it came down to us from the past, has been settled completely, finally and for good” (as cited in Shevtsov 1974, p. 174). The Russification of non-Russian peoples is the government’s answer to ethnic diversity in the U.S.S.R. See, for instance, the chapters on the Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians in Ashworth (1977) and on the peoples of Kazakhstan and Soviet Central Asia in Ashworth (1978). For a critical evaluation of the revival of national cultures within the Soviet Union see Rakowska-Harmstone (1977). The fundamentally different character of the nationality question in Eastern Europe was dealt with by McCagg (1977).

28. "Atlas, in Murdock’s title, is not used to mean a volume of maps, as the book is a collection of tabularized data.

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