Nations, states and homelands: territory and territoriality in nationalist thought

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ABSTRACT. This article is a response to growing recognition that the role of territory has been neglected in recent explorations of nationalism. To improve understanding of how and why territory has been significant to the development of nationalist thought, this article advances two closely related arguments. The first is that the ideology of nationalism is, itself, a product of attempts to merge two very different views about the value of territory and, consequently, two different practices of territoriality. Secondly, I argue that the main lines of division in explanations of nationalism reflect the differential privileging of one view of the significance of territory, and one practice of territoriality, over the other. To substantiate these assertions, the article begins by identifying the latent powers of space and outlining the process of territoriality that allows human beings to harness these powers. This is followed by a discussion of how nationalism – as part of the shift to modernity – contributed to a major transformation in the general significance of territory and territoriality. Drawing on both pre-modern and modern views, the article demonstrates how different understandings of the significance of territory and territoriality help to define the spectrum of nationalist thought that has emerged from the eighteenth-century work of Herder and Rousseau. Through this geographical lens, the article as a whole reveals the profoundly territorial quality of nationalism and thus confirms the view that neither nationalist ideology nor practice can be understood without reference to the spatial powers which it mobilises and creates.

Introduction

This article is based on the observation that general *acceptance* of the significance of territory to nationalism has not been balanced by an *understanding* of just what it is that makes territory so significant to this ideology. To address this disjunction, I offer a twofold argument about the role that territory has played in the development of nationalist thought.[1] First, I suggest that the ideology of nationalism is, itself, a product of attempts to merge two very different views about the value of territory and, consequently,

two different practices of territoriality.[2] Second, I argue that the main lines of division in *explanations* of nationalism reflect the differential privileging of one aspect of territory and one practice of territoriality over the other. In the course of the article, the usefulness of this perspective is illustrated by demonstrating that different understandings of territory and territoriality are intimately bound up with the different conceptions of nations, states and homelands that are so central to nationalist thought.

   To build this argument, I begin by identifying what I see as the latent powers of space and then reviewing the process of territoriality whereby human beings harness these latent powers through the creation of territories. Against this backdrop, I illustrate how nationalism – as part of the shift to modernity – contributed to a major transformation in the general significance of territory and territoriality. Finally, I outline how different understandings of the significance of territory and territoriality help to define the spectrum of nationalist thought which has emerged from the eighteenth-century work of Herder and Rousseau.

The latent powers of space and territoriality

To understand the significance of territory – or any of its manifestations such as nations, states, landscapes or homelands – it is useful to begin by thinking about the raw material which supports these constructs. This raw material is something that is called 'space' but which has proven remarkably difficult to define.[3] For some, the discrediting of 'absolute space' (Blaut 1961) has spawned relational concepts which view space as something that is 'folded into' social relations through practical activities (see Harvey 1996). For others, it has provoked calls for the abandonment of an autonomous science of the spatial in favour of a new concept of 'space–time' that can explain how time and space are bound together to constitute uneven and asymmetric constellations of power (see Massey 1993). To me, both of these conceptualisations highlight the difficulty of definition because they continue to rely on the existence of *something* which can be 'folded into' or 'bound together' with other concepts or things. As a working alternative, this article is informed by a conception of space as structures of the real world (as identified and interpreted through experience), which are themselves slow processes of long duration (after Shaefer 1953: 232). According to this definition, space has referents that exist outside of discursive construction but these are not trapped in universalised interpretations or in immutable notions of essence.

   From this perspective, space holds two sources of latent power for human beings. First, it comprises the substance that is fundamental to human life on this planet. Through its constitution of land, water and atmosphere, space encompasses the basic prerequisites of human survival: the food that we eat, the water that we drink, the air that we breathe and the resources for protecting ourselves. The existence of these things reflects the material dimension

of space, but the deployment of these qualities (for example, the identification of what constitutes food and its procurement) is relational. This relationship between space and human life in any form means that space is a source of latent material power: the power to sustain human life. Second, space is a source of latent emotional power. When the substantive qualities of space (for example, its physical features) are filtered through human experiences of time and process (the relational dimension of space) they have the capacity to invoke or release an emotional response. For example, where space is perceived as beautiful it moves us; where it is perceived as threatening it frightens us; where it is perceived as powerful we respect it.

Human beings may respond to the latent material and emotional qualities of space wherever they encounter them but they only begin to harness these sources of power when they transform space into places and territories. As this suggests, place and territory are quite different from space. In my opinion (and post-structuralist protestations aside), space is present whether anyone knows about it or not, but space only becomes a place when it acquires a 'perceptual unity' (May 1973: 212; *cf.* Tuan 1977; Gibson-Graham 1996), and it only becomes a territory when it is delimited in some way. In other words, both place and territory refer to space that has been defined in some way and, though a territory is also a place, not all places are territories. The creation of a territory creates a place that did not exist previously and both entities can exist at one point in time but not others (Paasi 1995: 44; Sack 1986: 16). As the process of bounding space suggests, territories are the product of human agency and this agency is usually referred to as 'territoriality'.

Historically, territoriality has been conceptualised in one of two ways (Storey 2001: 9–20), both of which have relevance to nationalist thought. The first, and now largely discredited, view is that human territoriality is a natural, instinctive phenomenon. According to this view, the physical environment produces discrete groups of distinctive people and it moulds genetically programmed behaviour in space. Thus, humans – like other animals – are assumed to have an in-built territorial urge or an inner compulsion to acquire and defend space (Ardrey 1967; Morris 1973 and 1994; Dawkins 1976). The widespread rejection of this view of territoriality is based on both its deterministic foundations and related assertions about the inevitability of conflict and intolerance as a response to human differences.

In contrast, the second and much more widely accepted view of human territoriality is that it represents a geographic strategy that connects society and space. According to this view:

territoriality ... [is] the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence or control people, phenomena and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area ... called a territory. (Sack 1986: 19)

As this suggests, territoriality is a primary geographical expression of power (see Sack 1986: 5). In other words, the *control* of space is an extremely potent component of power relations. Similarly, there is power in the actual *creation*

of territories because the application of territoriality reflects the needs and values of those who design and maintain them.

From this perspective on territoriality, there is room for the form and significance of territories to vary widely across both time and space. Here, the defining characteristic of a territory is that it has borders, but it is important to recognise that these entities are much more complicated than a simple location in, and demarcation of, space. As Anssi Paasi (1995: 42) argues, 'boundaries may be simultaneously historical, natural, cultural, political, economic or symbolic phenomena and each of these dimensions may be exploited in diverging ways in the construction of territoriality'. This enormous complexity of borders, and of the flexible functions that they can be called on to perform, means that boundaries are not nearly as fixed, stable or uncontested as is commonly assumed. It is through practices of territoriality that they are created, communicated and enforced but when such practices become ineffective territories can lose significance and disappear. As this suggests, the survival of territories is dependent on human belief in their value and this is where the latent powers of the space come into play.

Territoriality: harnessing the latent powers of space

Through territoriality, specific places (including territories) are constructed and it is this process that allows people to harness the material and emotional potential of space. When people create territories, they create boundaries that both unite and divide space along with everything that it contains. By combining some people and certain resources and separating them from other people and other resources, the creation of territories gives physical substance and symbolic meaning to notions of 'us' and 'them' and 'ours' and 'theirs'.

In terms of the material power of space, this means that territoriality transforms the resources that are necessary for human survival into *our* resources that are necessary for *our* survival. This is important because access to some resources and not others limits the ways in which people can live and this, in turn, reinforces the cohesiveness of the society which is defined by a territory. Through the creation of boundaries, it is no longer space that constitutes the basis for fulfilling material needs but association with a very specific territory. This in turn has implications for how the creation of territories harnesses the emotional power of space. In general, this process has four main dimensions and their relevance to nationalism makes them worth exploring in some detail.

First of all, territories are often conceptualised and promoted as 'natural' divisions of the earth's surface. Sometimes, this construction is reinforced by the physical characteristics of a territory: for example, islands are frequently viewed as discrete geographical entities because the boundaries of the land are clearly marked by water. In other instances, it is the act of naming a territory and demonstrating its longevity – sometimes through references to origins in

'time immemorial' – that people are convinced of its 'naturalness' (Smith 1999). In all cases, the invocation of nature is an attempt to draw on the legitimacy and immutability that the concept of nature has come to bestow (Jackson and Penrose 1993: 2–3).

Second – and through a process of extrapolation – the relationships between specific groups of human beings and the territories that sustain them are also conceptualised as 'natural'. Bonds between people, and between people and place, are considered virtually inviolate because they are constructed as biological (*cf*. Tuan 1975: 25). Thus, kinship ties are commonly viewed as stronger than any other connections between people, and bonds to homelands are cemented through processes of birth and nurturing over time. The relationship between people and place is conceptualised as a symbiotic one: a given territory supports a given society and it requires the society's care if it is to continue to do so. On a more individual scale, people are born and/or raised in a specific place and it is this environment which is seen to shape them even as they place their mark upon it. Perhaps more fundamentally still, continuous occupation of a territory results in the literal merging of people with this territory. When people die and their bodies are buried or cremated, they eventually become dust – they become indistinguishable from the soil itself. Thus, in caring for the land, people can come to see themselves as caring for their ancestors, themselves and future generations.

The third aspect of the emotional power of territory stems from the fact that the vast majority of people have direct and personal experience of attachment to particular places. The kinds of places with which people feel a bond can vary enormously in both content and scale, but such places almost always involve deep feelings of belonging; of feeling 'at peace' and secure, or 'at home'. Perhaps the best way of conveying the potential depth of these attachments is to consider the responses of people who are removed from 'their' territories. Yi-Fu Tuan (1975) provides numerous examples of how people have expressed their connection with the soil throughout history, but one remarkably literal illustration relating to the Nuer people should suffice here.

Men who intend to leave the tribe of their birth to settle permanently in another tribe take with them some earth of their old country and drink it in a solution of water, slowly adding to each dose a greater amount of soil from their new country, thus gently breaking mystical ties with the old and building up mystical ties with the new. (Evans-Prichard 1940: 115 as quoted in Tuan 1975: 32)

Human history is filled with similar examples of culturally encoded and individually experienced manifestations of deep connections with specific territories. Where urbanisation and industrialisation have occurred, such attachments to the soil itself have become more abstract, but this has not eliminated a sense of connectivity to territories (Calhoun 1994: 24–6; Mackenzie 1976: 130–2). The places that inspire a sense of attachment may change, but this sense itself has proven very difficult to dislodge. The point

here is that when individuals have personal experiences of geographical attachments, this makes it easy for them to extend the same sentiments to others over both time and space. Through this process, personal experiences of territorial attachment give rise to the assumption that such bonds have a 'natural universality'. This, in turn, makes it relatively easy to downplay the exclusionary power of territories because it becomes incomprehensible that anyone would want to live where they do not belong. The enduring power of this view is reflected in the tendency for contemporary large-scale displacements of people actually to strengthen such assumptions about geographical attachment (Connor 2001: 66–8).

The fourth and final aspect of the emotional power of territory is the tendency for human beings to reinforce their connections with specific places through history, memory and myth (Lowenthal 1985; Schöpflin 1997: 28–9; Smith 1999). This is crucial to maintaining the significance of boundaries to those sustained by the territory and, in consequence, to inspiring their commitment to the survival of this territory. Every society has stories about its origins and its past. These stories reflect the uniqueness of the society and this distinctiveness is reinforced through the language of communication and through religious and/or historical allusions. Moreover, these stories always occur in space and are usually associated with specific sites and/or landscapes. As Tuan (1975: 33) writes,

Landscape is personal and tribal history made visible; the native's identity – his place in the total scheme of things – is not in doubt, because the myths that support it are as real as the rocks, the waterholes, and the hills that he can see and touch.

Through a process of symbolic transference, specific places become synonymous with the society's rootedness there. As such, histories, memories and myths are effective means of binding people together and of binding them to specific territories. Like the other ways of harnessing the emotional powers of space, these deep-seated connections are frequently portrayed and understood as 'natural'. It is worth noting, however, that social processes and conditions are capable, in their own right, of generating strong links between people and place (Harvey 1996): thus, removal of the legitimising cloak of 'nature' will not eliminate human attachments to specific places.

In summary, territoriality is a significant form of power. This is because it creates territories which are seen to satisfy both the material requirements of life and the emotional requirements of belonging – of placing oneself in both time and space. To a remarkable extent, our understanding of who we are is grounded in where we come from and where we are. For human beings, some measure of control over a territory, whatever form it takes, has been constructed as fundamental to a sense of control over one's self and, by extrapolation, to a society's control over itself (*cf.* Sack 1986). In combination, the qualities outlined above go a long way towards explaining why people exercise strategies of territoriality to create and maintain territories.

Modernity and nationalism: the transformation of territoriality

Over the past 200 years, nation-states have emerged as the dominant form of social and spatial organisation in the world as a whole. Most scholars agree that this success of nationalism is clearly bound up with the conditions of modernity (see, for example, Anderson 1983; Breuilly 1993; Gellner 1983; Greenfeld 1992; Hall and Jarvie 1992; Hroch 1985; Nairn 1996), but it is less frequently acknowledged (at least explicitly) that this success is also connected with a fundamental shift in ideas about the significance of territory. At its simplest, territory was transformed from a geographical expression of cultural identity into *the* fundamental basis for defining group and individual identities. Instead of expressing one dimension of who a person was, territory became the primary and overriding factor in defining the person. As this suggests, the modern state system is an historically unique form of social and spatial organisation. It is the product of innovative practices of territoriality.

In general, pre-modern societies were characterised by primary identification with small units of both territory and population (Anderson 1996: 140–1; Ruggie 1993: 150). For some this meant kin groups and/or tribes as well as the village and/or lands used to support the community. For others it meant the diocese, manor, guild or town. In all cases, these small units were embedded in larger political, cultural and religious entities and power was shared between institutions and levels of authority (Agnew 1994: 60–1; Anderson 1986: 115). In pre-modern times, membership in these larger units was *indirect* because it was based on belonging to some lower-order component of the hierarchy (Taylor 1998: 196–200). For example, some peasants were connected to lords whose positions were based on relationships with a king or, in another context, North American Indians belonged to kin groups which were part of larger tribes which might, in turn, be members of a confederation. In addition, not all territories were organised into states, while those that were often comprised discontinuous territories and/or were imprecisely defined through fluid frontier zones rather than fixed borders (Anderson 1996: 141). Where the category 'nation' had any relevance in these societies, it was *not* as a political term.

In contrast, the modern state required precise and lasting territorial delineation as a contiguous area in order to fulfil the functions defined by its distinguishing characteristics. Following Max Weber (1947: 143), the modern state is characterised by the existence of a regularised administrative staff and set of institutions, which exercise the state's claim to a monopoly over binding rule-making. This function is enforced through parallel claims that the state has a legitimate monopoly of the means of force (violence), a claim that rests on possession of the means to uphold this monopoly within a territorial area. This system of order requires association with a territory because its authority extends, not only over the members of the state, but also over all actions that occur within the area of its jurisdiction. As this suggests, territory acquired new importance in nation-states because it defined the bounds of legitimate power.

In most nation-states, this power has been democratised at least in so far as sovereignty is seen as something that rests with, and is exercised by, 'the people'. As this suggests, membership in a political unit is *direct* and, unlike pre-modern states, it is not achieved through membership in lower-level bodies. According to Taylor (1998: 196–7), this directness of access to the state worked to abolish the heterogeneity that underpinned earlier forms of hierarchical belonging and this, in itself, contributed to a new measure of uniformity within a state's population. This was paralleled by the gradual replacement of the pre-modern principle of hierarchical subordination with the modern principle of spatial exclusion (Walker 1990: 10). In nation-states, nation became a *political* term because it defined the people who were members of, and who held sovereignty within, a state (*cf*. Anderson 1996).

What I suggest here is that at least part of the success of the nation-state as a political form, and of nationalism as a political ideology, stems from their attempts to combine elements of pre-modern territoriality with those of modernity. At the risk of over-simplification, both of these forms of territoriality can be defined according to two criteria. The first is the relationship between territory and identity, and the second is the way in which either the material or the emotional powers of territory are privileged.

The first form of territoriality is one in which identity is *culturally* defined. Here, the significance of territory is that it encompasses the geographical distribution of a culture. As this suggests, it is the emotive power of a group's attachment to the land that has primary influence in the formation of a territory and in strategies to preserve it. Here, material resources are still important but they are used to reinforce what are fundamentally emotional bonds and claims to space. In contrast, the second form of territoriality is one in which identity is *territorially* defined. Here, it is the geographical distribution of a political unit that is used to delineate a territory (Sack 1986; Greengrass 1991). As this suggests, it is the material resources of a territory, including the symbolic significance of controlling it, that has primary influence in its formation and in strategies to preserve it. The emotive powers of territory continue to be drawn upon, but their primary function is to reinforce what are fundamentally material or functional claims to space.

It is through the combination of a cultural identity with a territorial identity, and the privileging of this composite identity over all others, that nationalism derives much of its appeal and resilience (*cf*. Guibernau 1996: 3). The ongoing process of attempting to merge these two different types of identity gives nation-states an in-built flexibility. This is because any failure of the state to meet fundamental needs is tempered by recourse to the nation and vice versa. At the same time, though, the difficulties of achieving perfect merging also gives nation-states an in-built tension. This is because the sustained failure of either the state or the nation to meet the fundamental needs of its people reduces their faith in the value of the nation-state and the specific territory that it has created. This has the capacity to destroy any given nation-state but, importantly, nationalist ideology also offers a clear model

for forming new nation-states when this occurs. Instead of abandoning the pursuit of an impossible ideal – namely, the creation of discrete and uniform nations that fit perfectly within the territory of a state – nationalism encourages the view that it is a specific nation-state that is faulty (Penrose 1994). This means that the demise of some nation-states simply leads to the creation of new ones and, in consequence, the dominance of nation-states in shaping the global geo-political order remains unaltered.

In all of these ways, nationalism constitutes an historically innovative and very powerful form of territoriality. Indeed, as Tom Nairn (1996: 80) suggests, nationalism is more than just another doctrine: it also defines the 'general condition of the modern body politic' and constitutes a fundamental element of the 'climate of contemporary political and social thought'. As I have shown, much of this strength is derived from combining the latent material and emotional powers of space through practices of territoriality which involve continuous attempts to merge cultural and territorial identities.

Nationalist thought: from territory to nations and homelands

Where nationalism as political practice has thrived on the flexible merging of different ideas about the value of territory and different views of territoriality, the same has not been true for the development of a coherent theory of the underlying ideology. In other words, where confusion of terms and shifting rhetoric have worked well for the *practice* of nationalism, they have undermined theoretical attempts to *explain* the phenomenon. Montserrat Guibernau (1996: 3) acknowledges the 'fragmentary nature of current approaches' to the study of nationalism and suggests that this 'originates from their inability to merge its two fundamental attributes'. She goes on to identify the first of these attributes as 'the political character of nationalism as an ideology defending the notion that state and nation should be congruent', and the second as 'its capacity to be a provider of identity for individuals conscious of forming a group based upon a common culture, past, project for the future and attachment to a concrete territory' (*cf.* Geertz 1973; Hutchinson 1994; Smith 1998). When these two attributes of nationalism are viewed through a geographical lens it becomes clear that they bear a strong resemblance to the two forms of territoriality which I have outlined above. In many ways, the disjunction that Guibernau so usefully identifies reinforces the view that an understanding of nationalist thought rests heavily on an understanding of territory and territoriality.

What I suggest in the next few pages is that the history of nationalist thought can be seen as a history of attempts to explain – or, importantly, to prescribe – how these two different territorialities work together. My argument here is that different theories of nationalism reflect different understandings of how and why people use territory to mobilise power around emotional and material resources. As I demonstrate below, these differences

are often expressed in different understandings of nations and homelands. To illustrate this argument, I begin by looking at the work of Johann von Herder and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose early conceptions of the nation continue to define the spectrum of theories about nationalism. This is followed by a brief discussion of the displacement of territory from considerations of nationalism during the second half of the twentieth century and a summary of theoretical developments in this period.

Essential/primordialist theories of nationalism: privileging the nation

In general terms, the two perspectives that have come to define the range of theories about nationalism conform closely to the two forms of territoriality which I have described as being brought together in the construction of nation-states. The first of these is usually referred to as 'primordialist' and is usually seen to originate in the writings of people such as Vico, Fichte and especially Herder (Breuilly 1993: 54–64; Penrose and May 1991). Primordialists may disagree about whether human territoriality is instinctive or strategic but they are united by a belief that attachment between societies and territories is natural, and thus, essential (cf. Özkirimli 2000; Smith 1998). For Herder and subsequent primordialists – usually proponents of particular nationalist movements – nations are natural phenomena and they are the products of bonding between people and territory. As Herder wrote:

Seas, mountain-ranges, and rivers are the most natural boundaries not only of lands but of peoples, customs, languages, and empires, and they have been, even in the greatest revolutions in human affairs, the directing lines or limits of world history. If otherwise mountains had arisen, rivers flowed or coasts trended, then how very different would mankind have scattered over this tilting place of nations. (Herder, as quoted in Hayes 1926–7: 723)

The centrality of the bond between people and territory to Herder's conception of nation is further demonstrated by the following quotation:

it is obvious why all sensual people, fashioned to their country, are so much attached to the soil, and so inseparable from it. The constitution of their body, their way of life, the pleasures and occupations to which they have become accustomed from their infancy, and the whole circle of their ideas, are climatic. Deprive them of their country, you deprive them of every thing. (Herder 1968 [1784]: 10)

For Herder, his intellectual descendants and virtually all nationalists, territory is inseparable from the people and the nation is the product of this immutable bonding (for example, Hayes 1926–7 and 1931; Kohn 1967 [1944]; van den Berg 1978; Shils 1957). For these people, the homeland is the geographical dimension of the nation – in mind and space. From this perspective, the function of nation-states is to permit the natural evolution of fundamental units of humanity – nations – without outside interference. Accordingly, it is argued that the geographical distribution of the nation should define the boundaries of the state and the function of the state should be to protect the nation.

Although few contemporary scholars support the view that nations are natural divisions of humanity, this perspective retains relevance to contemporary debates for two reasons. The first is that the primordialist conception of nations – as essential – has become deeply embedded in 'common sense' understandings of the world. This is especially true in places where the nation-state has effectively structured geopolitical organisation for long periods of time and among people who look to nationalist ideology to redress their positions of marginality. As long as the belief that nations are natural continues to inform understandings of homelands and states as well as political practice, it retains relevance to nationalist thought. The second reason that primordialist views continue to figure in contemporary debates is the simple fact that they constitute the foil against which alternative perspectives have been developed. Accordingly, an understanding of primordialism is a necessary prerequisite to sound consideration of different conceptions of the relationship between territory, nations and homelands.

Functional/modernist theories of nationalism: privileging the state

In contrast to the primordialist focus on the emotional power of territory, the second major line of thinking about nations has been preoccupied with the material and/or functional powers of territory. This emphasis is consistent with a primary interest in states rather than nations. Here again, there is disagreement about whether human territoriality is instinctive or strategic, but proponents of this perspective share the view that nations are the *product* of state-formation and not the *motivation* behind this process (see Breuilly 1993; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Hroch 1985; Nairn 1981). This privileging of the state over the nation is clearly reflected in Rousseau's ideas about the role of territory in the creation of nation-states.

Rousseau (1712–78), like Herder and others of the time, believed that the qualities of a territory had an influence on the societies that could develop there. For example, he begins Book III, Chapter VIII of *The Social Contract* (1947 [1762]: 64) with the assertion that: 'Liberty, not being a fruit of all climates, is not within the reach of all people.' A few paragraphs later he elaborates this position as follows:

Unfriendly and barren lands, where the product does not repay the labour, should remain desert and uncultivated, or peopled only by savages; lands where men's labour brings in no more than the exact minimum necessary to subsistence should be inhabited by barbarous peoples: in such places all polity is impossible. Lands where the surplus of product over labour is only middling are suitable for free peoples; those in which the soil is abundant and fertile and gives a great product for a little labour call for monarchical government ... (1947 [1762]: 65–6)

As this suggests, Rousseau did not share Herder's primary concern with cultural development or the formation of an identity that was linked to a specific territory. Instead, Rousseau was interested in the levels of productivity

that a territory could support and the form of government that this could sustain. This very different attitude to the role of territory in state-formation becomes even clearer in the following quotation:

A body politic may be measured in two ways – either by the extent of its territory, or by the number of its people; and there is, between these two measurements, a right relation which makes the State really great. *The men make the State and the territory sustains the men*; the right relation therefore is that the land should suffice for the maintenance of the inhabitants, and that there should be as many inhabitants as the land can maintain. (1947 [1762]: Book II, Chapter X, 39, emphasis added)

As this quotation suggests, Rousseau believed that it is the size of the state, and the carrying capacity of the land that makes up the state, which determines population. Rousseau's preoccupation with the state means that he does not provide a definitive statement about just what a nation is (Cobban 1964: 107–8), but it is clear that he does not see it as an extension of the family or as a culturally entrenched phenomena. In the Geneva Manuscript, he writes that:

Although the functions of the father of a family and of the prince should tend to the same objective, it is by ways so different; their duties and their rights are so distinct, that one cannot confuse them without forming the most false ideas about the principles of society. (Geneva Manuscript, Book I, Chapter V; as quoted in Masters 1968: 278)

In *The Social Contract*, he is more specific about the capacity for deeply established cultures to inhibit the formation of a body politic:

What people, then, is a fit subject for legislation? *One which, already bound by some unity of origin, interest, or convention, has never yet felt the real yoke of law; one that has neither customs nor superstitions deeply ingrained*, one which stands in no fear of being overwhelmed by sudden invasion; one which, without entering into its neighbours' quarrels, can resist each of them single-handed, or get the help of one to repel another; *one in which every member may be known by every other*, and there is no need to lay on any man burdens too heavy for a man to bear; *one which can do without other peoples and without which all others can do*; one which is neither rich nor poor, but *self-sufficient*; and lastly, *one which unites the consistency of an ancient people with the docility of a new one*. (1947 [1762]: Book II, Chapter X, 41, emphasis added)

For Rousseau, groups of people could be distinguished from one another but the idea of a general will – as the moral personality of the state – was necessary before the idea of the nation (a national consciousness) could have any reality (Cobban 1964: 108). Thus, even though his later work on Corsica (1765) and Poland (1772) relates his general 'functionalist' views of the state to the emotional and moral-political features of nationhood, the primacy ascribed to the state does not alter. In Rousseau's words: 'It is certain that nations are in the long run what the government makes them be' (*Economie politique,* as quoted in Grimsley 1972: 14).

For Rousseau, and many of his intellectual heirs up to the present day, it is the material powers associated with territory that define the state, and the boundaries of the state that define those of the nation. According to this second main line of thinking, a nation is the citizens of a state and the purpose of a nation is to ensure the continuity and legitimacy of the state. In keeping with this view of territory and territoriality, a homeland is the area that comprises the state of citizenship. As this suggests, this perspective transfers the homeland from the realm of cultural attachment to that of politics. Here, the homeland is separated from the nation and becomes instead an attribute of the state.

From Herder and Rousseau to contemporary nationalist thought

In many ways, the different perspectives on territory and territoriality advanced by Herder and Rousseau can be traced through to contemporary debates about what nationalism is and, more specifically, about what constitutes nations and when they originate. However, the lines of continuity are not perfectly linear or consistently strong and this is especially true in terms of the place that territory and territoriality have occupied in nationalist thought. To a considerable degree, it seems to me that geographers and geopoliticians bear responsibility for a gradual displacement of the territorial dimension of nationalism in the latter half of the twentieth century. There are two main reasons for this and both relate to the negative consequences of actually *applying* geographical ideas about territory, power and state formation.

First of all, geographical ideas, like those advanced by Freidrich Ratzel (1844–1904) and Halford Mackinder (1861–1947), are deeply implicated in the justification of European colonial expansion (*cf.* Godlewska and Smith 1994). Most obviously, Ratzel's reliance on a 'natural' and instinctive notion of territoriality led him to conclude that territorial expansion was essential to the survival of a state – if states did not grow, they would die (Ratzel, as cited in James and Martin 1972: 168–71). As David Livingstone (1992: 200) explains, 'Ratzel believed he had disclosed the natural laws of the territorial growth of states and he happily located the contemporary colonial thrust of the European powers in Africa as the manifestation of their quest for *Lebensraum*'. Mackinder shared a similar concern with providing scientific justification for foreign policy but he also viewed the teaching of geography as an imperial task (Livingstone 1992: 194–5). According to Hudson (1977: 12), 'the study and teaching of the new geography at an advanced level was vigorously promoted at [the end of the nineteenth century] largely, if not mainly, to serve the interests of imperialism in its various aspects including territorial acquisition, economic exploitation, militarism and the practice of class and race domination'.

The second context in which the application of geographical notions of territory and territoriality produced destructive outcomes was through the

development of *Geopolitik* and the incorporation of these ideas into Nazi practices of territorial expansion and genocide (see Bassin 1987; Murphy 1994). The term '*Geopolitik*' was coined by the Swedish geographer Rudolf Kjellén (1846–1922) in 1899 and refined by the German Karl Haushofer (1869–1946) in the 1920s (Murphy 1994). The latter defined the 'discipline' as 'the art of using geographical knowledge to give support and direction to the policy of a state' (James and Martin 1972: 185). In lending itself so openly to the legitimisation of specific political policies and objectives – both colonialism and Nazi aggression – *Geopolitik* became a pariah of the academic world in the post-Second World War era. Over time, growing condemnation of colonial projects and revulsion at Nazi practices made the relationship between territory and power an intellectual minefield. When this was combined with a general discrediting of the theories of environmental determinism and social Darwinism – on which these projects had relied – discussions about the significance of territory to nationalism became increasingly muted and indirect.

By the time nationalism re-emerged as a powerful force in the 1960s, most geographers had scuttled off to safer ground and the discipline as a whole floundered in the erudite wasteland of spatial analysis – the means by which geography sought to transform itself into a legitimate science. During the 1990s, a group of young geographers began to promote a new field called 'critical geopolitics' but, with lamentably few exceptions, this work has been caught up in the fetishistic whirlpools of apolitical post-modernism and has concentrated on the discursive analysis of policy documents, media images and texts. Until very recently, and despite some notable exceptions, the net result has been that the geographical contribution to studies of nationalism has been remarkably limited. This has left the field largely to sociologists and political scientists whose perspective, quite understandably, has not been primarily spatial or territorial.

The implications of this sequence of events for the study of nationalism have been significant. Most obviously, it means that theories of nationalism have concentrated on the sociological and political dimensions of the ideology and of the underlying concept of nation. This is, perhaps, most clearly evident in the popular (but, in my opinion, dubious) distinction between civic and ethnic nations, and in ongoing debates about whether nationalism is primarily a social or a political phenomenon. Importantly, neither these new categories of nation, nor the attendant debates about the nature of nationalism, include references to territory as an element of disagreement. Instead, arguments about what a nation is tend to focus on how a population is defined and issues of territory have become largely incidental in this process. As a consequence, however unwitting, the role of territory has been largely separated from theoretical positions on the category nation. Possibly the best illustration of this largely inadvertent displacement of territory from the core of nationalism studies is Anthony Smith's (1991: 82–3) distinction between 'territorial' and 'ethnic' types of nationalism, where the former is used as a loose synonym for 'civic'. Although Smith's work as a

whole is characterised by sensitivity to the symbolic importance of territory to nations, the implication here is that territory is not significant to 'ethnic' nationalism. In part, this perspective is explained by the use of the separate concept of 'the homeland' as the territorial dimension of 'ethnic' nations, but this practice reinforces the general tendency to deal with territory at arm's length, away from the central concerns of social characteristics and political motivations.

Even at this distance, though, it seems to me that there are strong parallels between competing conceptions of the nation and the two long-standing perspectives on the significance of territory which I have outlined above. Where the nation is viewed as ethnic, the homeland tends to be seen as an emotive, cultural entity – a geographical extension of 'the people'. Where the nation is viewed as civic, the homeland is viewed as a material resource defined by the boundaries of the state. The point here is that even though issues of territory and territoriality have become subliminal in contemporary debates about nations and nationalism, they retain real relevance and thus have an important contribution to make to the understanding of these phenomena.

Perennial theories of nationalism: balancing nation and state

The intellectual and political developments of the second half of the twentieth century help to explain why contemporary scholars of nationalist thought continue to shy away from, or simply overlook, direct considerations of the central role that territory plays in nationalism. And yet, if one turns to a perspective that has emerged since the 1960s, one can see that understandings of territory and its power remain central to theoretical positions. This third perspective stretches across the middle of the spectrum originally defined by the work of Herder and Rousseau and, until very recently, it was commonly referred to as 'perennialist'.

According to Umut Özkirimli (2000: 68), the term 'perennialism' was introduced by Smith (1984) to connote a less radical version of primordialism in which *ethnie* (the foundations of nations) were viewed as long-standing historical phenomena but were not viewed as 'natural'. As proponents of primordialsm have bowed under the weight of anti-essentialist arguments, the spectrum of debate has been reconfigured such that perennialism has been pushed toward this original extreme. At least part of the resulting middle ground is in the process of being claimed by scholars who identify themselves as 'ethno-symbolists' (for example, Guibernau and Hutchinson 2001; Özkirimli 2000; Smith 1998). My inclination is to reserve judgement about both the categorisation and nomenclature being advanced here, partly because this reconfiguration is still in process but also because it may benefit from the type of geographical analysis that this article is designed to encourage. Perhaps, like nations themselves, it is easier to say what these theories are *not* than to identify clear points of agreement that bind them into a definable

theoretical position. As a whole, perennialism and ethno-symbolism are united by a rejection of the modernist perspective on nations. In other words, they disagree with the broad (and simplified) modernist assumption that nations are new responses to changes associated with modernity. Here, it is worth noting that the treatment of 'modernism' as a coherent whole produces a sharply dichotomised picture of contemporary debates that is not borne out by the literature itself (see Özkirimli 2000: 214).

Having acknowledged the difficulties of clearly defining the middle of the spectrum of nationalist thought, it is useful to risk advancing a few general characteristics of this zone as a means of illustrating the significance of territory – actual and potential – to these ideas. As I have already intimated, the theories that claim middle ground generally accept that nations are non-rational entities (Connor 1994), which form around historic ethnic cores or *ethnie* (Smith 1986). These ethnic cores are themselves viewed as at least putative extensions of kin groups. As this suggests, this perspective occupies the middle ground between the extreme primordialist view that nations are natural and the extreme modernist view that nations are inventions. Among proponents of the perennialist position, nations are viewed as constructions but, by the same count, they are also considered to be much more than a functional response to the modern requirements of capitalism. Although not explicit in this regard, it seems to me that the perennialist-cum-ethno-symbolist position also finds sound middle ground in its understanding of how nationalism draws flexibly on both the material and the emotional powers of territory.

At its simplest, this perspective acknowledges the power of attachments to place and it also recognises that these emotional bonds can be intensified through the identification or construction of long historical lineages of territorial occupation. As Walker Connor (2001: 56) points out, 'the land masses of the world are divided into some three thousand homelands' and these territories retain huge significance to their inhabitants despite having 'the political borders of something less than two hundred states superimposed upon them'. This, in itself, is a salutary reminder that territories are seldom discrete or exclusive. Instead, they are layered and overlapping and their relative significance can – and does – change according to context. At the same time, this perspective also acknowledges that the material needs associated with modernity in general – and capitalism in particular – have influenced the ways in which local emotions are mobilised and reshaped so that they extend to state boundaries (see, for example, Anderson 1983). Yet here, again, the successful creation of new states, particularly in Africa and Asia, has not been paralleled by the emergence of 'overriding popular commitment to the civic, territorial "nation" based on the post-colonial state and its boundaries' (Smith 1996: 448; see also Tønnesson and Antlöv 1998).

To my mind, this strongly suggests that neither the territorial identity of a state, nor the cultural identity of a nation can, in themselves, explain the power and resilience of nationalism. By the same count, neither is capable of independently explaining the success or the failure of nation-state formation.

From this perspective, a nation comes to be defined as a named and self-aware community of people who share elements of overlapping – and shifting – cultural, political and economic identities. These identities have been historically constructed through personal attachments to specific places within a delineated territory and this territory may, or may not, conform to the boundaries of a state. Here, a homeland is the territory which contains and/or defines the places that inform a multifaceted and often evolving sense of self, as well as a sense of belonging. Like the two formative perspectives of nationalist thought, it seems clear that an exploration of perennialist/ethno-symbolist ideas about territory could be very useful in clarifying why particular conceptions of nation are held and how the formation of nation-states is explained.

Conclusions

In the preceding pages, I have shown just how central understandings of territory and strategies of territoriality have been to the development of nationalist thought. To do so, I outlined how the creation of territories can be used to harness and mobilise latent powers of space. Among other things, it is the creation of territories that defines an 'us' and establishes boundaries between this 'us' and all others who become 'them'. Through this process, the creation of territories has the capacity to bind people to specific places, and people value and protect these territories as long as they continue to fulfil fundamental emotional and material needs.

Until the dawn of modernity, human societies developed a myriad of different territorial strategies – or territorialities – to meet these needs in culturally specific and internally consistent ways. With modernity, however, these diverse strategies of social organisation in space became vulnerable to the greater efficiency and growing power of new nation-states. As I have suggested, the effectiveness of these new units is directly related to their capacity to facilitate ongoing economic transitions. At the same time, though, this capacity was itself directly related to the flexible ways in which nation-states mobilised popular support through the integration of cultural and territorial identities.

As I have shown, theories of nationalism all share the common goal of explaining how and why this process of integration was initiated and how and why it continues to be supported. Although the role of territory in this process has not always been considered directly, different understandings of territory have remained implicit in explanations of nationalism. More specifically, different understandings of territory can be seen to define the spectrum that has shaped nationalist thought. At one extreme, scholars who are preoccupied with the role of nations in nation-state formation also tend to be concerned primarily with the latent emotional powers of space in the creation of territories. At the other extreme, those who give primacy to the

state tend to concentrate on the concrete material powers of territory as the driving force behind the formation and maintenance of nation-states. Most explanations of nationalism lie between these two extremes but the full spectrum remains occupied.

Through this geographical lens, it is clear that nationalism *is* a profoundly territorial phenomenon; it is unimaginable without the application of human territoriality to space. From this perspective, the success of the ideology of nationalism seems to lie in the flexible mobilisation of the emotional and material powers of territory through the combination of nations and states. In other words, the strength of nationalism is a product of both ideological and practical attempts to establish links between culturally defined entities bound to specific places and territorially defined political units. By extrapolation, the strength of nation-states lies in their shifting and often intersecting appeals to the emotional and material needs of their members. Perhaps most powerfully of all, many people have become convinced that nationalist understandings and uses of territory are natural and, hence, unalterable.

As history shows, however, it is worth remembering that the values placed on territory can change, and that new forms of territoriality can emerge. If this happens, the current dominance of nation-states may be challenged. Indeed, many scholars feel that such a challenge is well under way and some, such as James Anderson (1996) and John Ruggie (1993) are already attempting to document associated shifts in the ways in which territory is conceptualised, valued and deployed. This work is tantalising evidence of the fundamental argument advanced in this article: namely, that territory is fundamental to nationalist thought. Moreover, it seems extremely likely that challenges to nationalism will be grounded in new understandings of territory and new practices of territoriality, which will continue to draw on the latent emotional and material powers of space to mobilise new forms of power.

Notes

1 In this article, the term 'nationalist thought' is used in the broadest sense of *ideas* about the nation, nationalist ideology and nationalism in practice. As this suggests, the focus is on scholarship rather than practice, but because proponents of particular nationalist movements have also written on the subject this distinction is not unproblematic. To overcome potential confusion, I use 'ideology' to refer to the specific set of convictions that define nationalism (see note 2) and add descriptors such as 'explanation', 'perspectives' and 'theories' to indicate *thinking* about this ideology and its application.

2 Here, 'nationalist ideology' refers to the core conviction that the boundaries of a nation (however defined) and a state (following Weber 1947) should coincide. In contrast, 'nationalism' refers to attempts to implement nationalist ideology in practice.

3 For example, David Storey's (2001) excellent work entitled *Territory: The Claiming of Space*, offers no definition of space at all. Similarly, Robert Sack's 1986 work on *Human Territoriality* argues that 'space and time are fundamental components of human experience' and that 'they are not merely naively given facts of geographic reality' (Sack 1986: 216), but he does not provide any definition of space (but see Sack 1973). In the fourth edition of *Political Geography*, Peter Taylor

and Colin Flint (2000: 39) also avoid definition but they do assert that 'space itself is an area of contention. Space is never just a stage upon which events unfold: there is nothing neutral about any spatial arrangement.' For me, this last example epitomises the tendency to define space in relation to something else – in this case the *agency* implicit in 'spatial arrangement' is ignored such that this term slips quietly (but inappropriately) into synonymy with space. The belief that 'spatial arrangement' logically demands the arrangement of something that already exists in some form helps to explain why I have chosen the definition outlined in the main body of the text.

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