

Ewan Crawford

University of the West of Scotland

The only good nationalist ... an analysis of the values of nationalism as depicted in the British press.

Introduction

For many western liberals there are few concepts more distasteful than nationalism. This distaste is echoed by mainstream politicians in established nation states such as the United Kingdom who routinely dismiss nationalists as narrow separatists or worse.

Michael Billig, however, demonstrates powerfully the irony in this condemnation – those politicians (British Prime Minister Gordon Brown being a clear current example) who profess the most dislike for nationalism are often the most successful nationalists, in the sense that they ensure the continuation of their own favoured nation states by re-inforcing the idea that these are timeless, natural and collective entities.

This sense of the naturalness of the British state for example, means that the concept of nationalism disappears from civilized British political discourse and can be projected on to “others”.

This paper is interested in these others. In particular it discusses the way that nationalists are depicted by the national press of an established nation state – The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It will do this by engaging in a content analysis of selected British newspapers combined with some textual analysis of individual articles.

The findings and discussion presented here represent the initial stages of a project that will engage in a fuller content analysis to allow firm conclusions to be made about the way nationalists are presented to newspaper readers.

Great Britain – as a multi-national state - would seem to be an interesting case study in this respect. Nationalist parties – seeking autonomy from the centre- have become part of the British political system. The study can therefore focus on how the UK press has represented both “internal” nationalism - in the sense of those movements which threaten the existing integrity of the nation state - and “overseas” nationalism.

Nationalist debates

By studying events covered in newspapers, this paper then seeks to assess in effect the ways the print news media defines nationalism.

For scholars there has been no single agreed definition of the concept. As Michael Keating says, there has been endless debate on the meaning of nationalism. However, he says: "Nationalism is a doctrine of self-determination; that much is agreed." (Keating, 2001, p1)

Anthony Smith argues that despite the various definitions, common themes are apparent, the most important of which is over-riding concern with the nation (although the idea of the nation itself is controversial). Smith himself offers a working definition: "An ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential 'nation' " (Smith, 2001, p9).

From this definition it is clear that Smith agrees that those striving for political independence are not the only nationalists – those seeking to maintain their autonomous national status can also be categorized as nationalist. As we will see this is an important idea for the purposes of this study. (In a Scottish context there are even those who have categorized explicit opponents of Scottish independence as being Scottish nationalists themselves because of the way they accept and re-inforce the idea of a Scottish nation - while maintaining hostility to a Scottish nation *state* (Miller, 2008). Much of the academic discussion over nationalism focuses on debates over its causes and origins. On one end of the scale is primordialism, an idea of continuity that locates nationalist movements in an ancient, collective identity. "When nations claim to be communities of common ancestry, they are, from the primordialist perspective, essentially correct." (Brown, 2000, p 6).

At the other end of the scale is the dominant modernist school – those who believe that nations are essentially invented or imagined (Gellner, 1983, Anderson, 1991) and who believe that the origins of nations can be located in the industrialization processes of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century.

Anderson in particular has been influential for those interested in the relationship between the media and nationalism as he emphasises the role of publishing and print capitalism in creating an imagined collective community among readers.

Anthony Smith offers an alternative approach to either of these positions, which he characterizes as ethno-symbolist, and which emphasizes cultural aspects in the formation of nationalism and rejects what it sees as the modernists' over-concern with the role of elites.

This paper is not a contribution to that debate (although to my mind a reading of Edward Cowan's history of The Declaration of Arbroath (2003) and Neal Ascherson's discussion of the same topic (2002) effectively challenges the modernist position with respect to Scotland)

Instead I am interested in how contemporary nationalists and nationalist movements have been characterized.

This opens up a further debate – not about the origins and causes of nationalism but about the nature of nationalism.

Perhaps the most cited debate in this context is the distinction drawn between ethnic and civic nationalism (Harris, 2009, Ozkirimli, 2000). Ethnic nationalism is often used as a term which refers to a national group claiming the right to self-determination by reference to the homogeneous nature and history of the relevant population. Civic nationalism, by contrast, seeks to mobilize a population, sharing the same territory,

which it recognizes as being ethnically diverse, by emphasizing a shared interest in coming together to promote the common well-being.

In this respect civic nationalism is often popularly seen as good or liberal nationalism (or as good as a dodgy concept such as nationalism can be) while ethnic nationalism is clearly bad and illiberal.

In the words of Smith: "while civic nationalism *may*, in the eyes of some political philosophers, be combined with liberalism and so achieve a measure of respectability, ethnic blood and soil forms of nationalism remain beyond the moral pale; their unregenerate particularism debars them from any civilized intercourse with 'mainstream' political ideologies." (Smith, 2001, p41).

Except, as Smith himself points out, things are not that clear-cut. It seems hard to disagree with the idea that even the most civic-minded nationalist movement relies to some extent on an ethnic basis. For example Kearton (2005) has argued convincingly that a mainstream self-styled civic nationalist movement – the Scottish National Party has an ethnic core – an ethnic core which paradoxically emphasizes a civil, inclusive view of the Scottish nation.

Also, while recognizing the significance of the distinction between civic and ethnic (or what he calls ethnocultural) nationalism David Brown is unconvinced by the whole notion of good civic nationalism and bad ethnic nationalism. He argues instead that the origins of illiberal nationalism lie in the extent to which these movements, regardless of civic or ethnic characteristics, are driven by insecurity and the perceived threat of "others" (Brown, 2000, pp66-69).

For some, (De Cilla et al 1999) the civic/ethnic distinction also appears to be less important than the idea that nations and nationalism are essentially about being different: the notion that nations are defined not just by a sense of community (however that has been created) but also by not being another community. In a list of "basic assumptions" for the investigation of national identities, De Cilla et al say: "As soon as it is elevated to an imaginary collective level, both the construction of sameness and the construction of difference violate pluralistic and democratic variety and multiplicity of group-internal homogenization." (ibid, p153)

However, it seems unreasonable to write-off the entire ethnic/civic distinction is worthless: there are clearly movements seeking autonomy that are more inclined towards the civic ideal and which are comfortable with, and indeed encourage, diversity (eg Plaid Cymru and the SNP) and those which emphasise a greater racial and ethnic element (eg the Vamms Blok/Belang).

For this study another distinction in the study of nation states is important – the differences drawn between patriotism and nationalism. In western political discourse patriotism – love of one's country - is clearly a good thing. In *The Audacity of Hope*, Barack Obama writes of the American people: "We value patriotism and the obligations of citizenship, a sense of duty and sacrifice on behalf of our nation. (Obama, 2007, p55) The British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, has consistently championed the idea of patriotism, calling for among others things, his party – the Labour Party to be unashamedly patriotic (BBC, 2006).

While using the word patriotism freely it is difficult to imagine the idea of nationalism being used by these political leaders approvingly. Indeed Gordon Brown has frequently

hit out at nationalism as a means of attacking political opponents – both the SNP and the British Conservative Party (Brown, 1999, The Scotsman 2010)

For Breuilly (1996) the conceptual difference is uninteresting while Billig (1995) ridicules the distinction.

Billig's key focus is on the way that existing nation states maintain their status as natural while at the same time projecting the irrationality of nationalism on to others. In this way, he writes: " 'Our ' nationalism is not presented as nationalism, which is dangerously irrational, surplus and alien. A new identity, a different label, is found for it. 'Our' nationalism appears as 'patriotism' – a beneficial, necessary and often, American, force (ibid, p55).

Billig goes on to demonstrate the use of deixis - ostensibly banal words such as "us", "we", "our" in both the media and political rhetoric to re-inforce the naturalness and obviousness of existing national states.

Keating makes a similar point: "Some of those who condemn minority nationalism as necessarily backward frame this as a condemnation of all nationalism, ignoring the implicit nationalism underlying their own position and confusing their own metropolitan chauvinism with universal values and a cosmopolitan outlook," (Keating, 2001, p24)

A range of studies has since been published to test and challenge Billig's central idea and methodology (in a Scottish context see Law 2001, Rosie et al 2006)

These studies are usually interested in assessing the language used in newspapers about the nation state in question – to discuss the presence and power of deixis in forging the idea of national togetherness. This paper is more interested in Billig's "others" – those groups, parties and movements that *are* explicitly identified by the media as nationalists and to see if they are indeed depicted as irrational, surplus and alien.

Media representation

In conducting this analysis I am in essence investigating how journalists represent nationalists. That in turn requires a discussion of the general issue of media representation.

Much of the academic literature in this area focuses on objective news reporting and reveals the gaping chasm that exists between the claimed ethics of professional journalism that govern practice in western democracies and the critique of those practices in much of media studies.

Journalism textbooks for trainee reporters (eg Keeble, 2001) offer clear guidelines on the distinction between "objective" newswriting and opinion writing.

Randall says that overt comment in news stories in Britain and the US

"is thought to be so obviously wrong that many journalism textbooks do not even give it more than a passing mention. The authors take it for granted that none of their readers would contest the view that news pages are for information given as straight as it can be, and comment is for columnists and opinion pages", (Randall, 2000, p198).

For journalists therefore the distinction between news reporting and opinion writing is crucial. The press self-regulation body in the UK, the Press Complaints Commission, makes this clear when it says in its code of practice: "The Press, whilst free to be

partisan, must distinguish clearly between comment, conjecture and fact,” (Press Complaints Commission).

This distinction allows Lichtenberg to write that: “objectivity is a cornerstone of the professional ideology of journalists in liberal democracies,” (Lichtenberg, 2007, p239). News reporters on the whole therefore see themselves as offering a window on the world, presenting “us with an ongoing narrative about the world beyond our immediate experience. This narrative is asserted to be true.” (McNair, 1999, p 21). News journalists are in effect representing what is “out there” in an impartial manner.

In recent years some journalists (most prominently Lloyd 2004) and famously the former UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair (2007), have questioned whether core professional journalism principles are still being put into practice – particularly in the field of political reporting.

However this argument maintains that it is indeed possible for journalists to be objective newsgatherers and providers – it’s just that newspapers in particular have decided to become active players, rather than observers, in politics and that factual reporting and commentary have therefore become blurred.

The most sustained attack however has come from media studies. The whole idea of reporting as a window on the world is dismissed, as Lacey (2009) says, as naïve. Lichtenberg sums up the assault on objectivity as three-pronged: news reporting can be objective but is not; news reporting cannot be objective; and objective news reporting is undesirable (essentially because it is a strategy that allows some groups to exercise dominance over others). The notion of a clean separation between reporting and comment writing is essentially discarded by media studies. Although there are different approaches within the discipline (see Hesmondhalgh, 2003, Williams 2003, for good summaries) much of the critical analysis of western journalism practices is class-based (Curran 2002, Fowler, 1991, Philo, 1999, Hall et al 1978) and concentrates on explaining how the selection of news stories and the language used in those stories serves to maintain the dominant (capitalist) ideology.

This paper is interested in nationality rather than class - the intention is to investigate how nationalists, rather than competing economic interests, are depicted.

However, the idea of journalists fostering consensus – that we (for example we the ‘British people’) all share certain values - which is important in Hall and Fowler’s work in particular - is useful here.

The argument is that despite ostensible variations in the way newspapers cover news stories, these variations take place within a general consensus of values. Opinion outside that consensus is unreasonable. “It is this seemingly commonsensical belief that ‘the consensus’ is a ‘basic feature of everyday life’ that underpins journalistic efforts to codify unfamiliar problematic realities into familiar, comprehensible definitions about how the world works.” (Allan, 1999, p88).

This is interesting for this study, because I am interested in whether (and if so how) those called nationalists, however disparate, are codified in a comprehensible manner by journalists and if it is possible to discern within the language used a consensus view of the nature of nationalism – is it as Billig maintains presented as alien and irrational compared with the naturalness of an existing nation state such as the UK?

This in turn means examining the idea that “the use of particular words to describe events and issues represents not merely the choice of a descriptive phrase but also the choice of an attitude towards the event or issue.” (McCullagh, 2002, p23).

Methodology

This paper is therefore not primarily interested in why certain news stories have been selected for inclusion in newspapers. Instead it seeks to study the way that nationalists have been explicitly described by journalists and the attitude demonstrated towards nationalists through the choice of language in their articles.

To do this a content analysis of certain newspapers will be carried out. Further textual analysis will then be offered on the language used in selected articles from the overall sample.

Deacon et al say the purpose of content analysis is “to quantify salient and manifest features of a large number of texts and the statistics are used to make broader inferences about the processes and politics of representation.” (Deacon et al, 2007 p119)

The idea of content analysis, they say, is not to “read between the lines” - or “study deep questions” about textual or discursive forms. The aim is to count what is actually written in media texts and draw conclusions accordingly.

This idea of recording what is manifest is important for this study. That is not to dismiss more detailed discourse or frame analysis analysis that can investigate latent meanings (Goffman 1974, Entman 1993, Neuman et al, 1992 Semetko and Valkeburg, 2000).

But the main idea here is to base “interpretation upon the total completed analysis in order to see particular pieces of content in perspective.” (Berelson – in Schroder, 2002, p103).

The study will look at three national newspapers: The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph and The Herald. The Guardian is a liberal paper, broadly supportive of the UK Labour Party. By contrast The Daily Telegraph is generally right-wing and supportive of the British Conservatives (notwithstanding the fact that both papers have columnists hostile or at least oppositional to the current leadership of both parties). Both these papers are sold across the UK, including Scotland – although their Scottish readership makes up only a small fraction of their overall circulations.

The Herald is a national paper for Scotland – although based in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, where most of its readership lives, it is sold across the country. Its editorial position is unaligned: at elections to the Scottish Parliament it refused to endorse any party.

The papers were therefore chosen to reflect an ideological balance but also to compare a newspaper sold in a country with an important mainstream self-styled nationalist party (the SNP) with papers where no major (UK-wide) self-proclaimed nationalist party contests national elections.

The analysis consisted of the following:

(1) a count of all articles (news, features, opinion columns, editorials and obituaries) in the three papers which contained the word nationalist or nationalists in the first two months of 2007.

The year was chosen deliberately: elections to the Scottish Parliament were held in 2007 and the SNP was enjoying a high profile having built up a healthy lead in the opinion polls. This allows an investigation of whether the prospect of a nationalist victory prompted much discussion of the concept of nationalism, both in Scotland and the UK as a whole, from which the SNP wishes to secede.

(2) A count of the explicit description given to nationalists in the text (eg extremist, ultra, moderate). The precise method deployed was to record the occasions when a description of the nationalist/nationalists in question was offered in the words immediately preceding or following the use of the term.

(3) A record was also made of the occasions when a country (eg Scottish, Turkish), or other identifier, (eg Hindu, Cornish) was used immediately adjacently to the term nationalist/nationalists.

When the words preceding or immediately after the word nationalist or nationalists did not offer any description or identifier (eg presented simply as “nationalists” or “the nationalists” or a neutral description (eg nationalist agenda; “resurgent nationalists” - without adjacently saying what that agenda or resurgence is about) then the coding used was “no description or neutral.” It would have been possible to identify the way that nationalists were being described, or the country they were being identified with, on some of these occasions by looking for associated words or inferences elsewhere in the text. However, by confining the analysis to words directly next to the words nationalist/nationalists it is hoped that any contested interpretations can be reduced. By confining the search in this way there should be little doubt that the descriptions identified are explicitly ascribed to the nationalists in the articles. On a small number of occasions a phrase (ie more than one word) immediately before or after the use of nationalist/nationalists has been included to avoid any confusion over meaning.¹

The findings are outlined below:

Table 1. The Herald (62 articles, in which there were a total of 108 references to nationalist/nationalists)

¹ It should be noted that the words nationalist/nationalists were counted every time they appeared in the articles. There are therefore more references to nationalist/nationalists than there are articles. It should be also kept in mind that this means that in some articles the journalist has given the nationalists a description (eg extreme) and then later on referred to those individuals or groups as nationalists with no accompanying description. This is clearly done by the journalists to avoid clumsy repetition. This will slightly inflate the number of times nationalists have been recorded as “no description” (as they will in fact have been described earlier in the article).

General description	Country identifier	Other identifier	No description or neutral
Extreme	Scottish (8)	white	91*
of racism			
hard-line			
stuff-England			
Ethnic			
Blinkered			
proud			
Modern, normal			

*ie there was either no description or a neutral description on 91 occasions

There is a clear distinction between the two UK-wide national papers and The Herald. Of the 62 articles that appeared in The Herald which referred to nationalists, all but four were about Scotland. On almost all those occasions no description or identifier was offered in the words immediately next to the term nationalist/nationalists. Journalists in Scotland routinely use “the nationalists” as a synonym for the SNP, and believe that readers recognize this to be the case. Because of the size and status of the SNP (currently the governing party in the devolved Scottish Parliament) journalists clearly do not believe they need to offer any other description – any more than they would need to describe the Labour Party as centre-left or the Conservatives as centre-right; the party name alone is deemed to be sufficient.

The SNP does not believe nationalism to be a pejorative term for its primary goal – Scottish independence – although the party objects strongly to being called, as it often is by its opponents, “separatists”. It seems reasonable to conclude therefore that when The Herald refers to “the nationalists” it expects its readers to understand both that this means the SNP and simultaneously those who are campaigning for independence. From table one it can be seen, however, that on a few occasions a description is offered.

One article in particular is worth highlighting – a report based on comments from Nicol Stephen, the leader of one of the SNP’s opponents – the Scottish Liberal Democrats. Stephen is quoted intriguingly as saying that the SNP needs to become a “modern, normal” nationalist party, which he seems to equate (although it is not explicitly spelt out) with abandoning its campaign for independence. Quite how this would be an example of modern, normal nationalism is not clear.

Elsewhere in the article, the reporter attempts to characterize the SNP’s view of itself: “Call them whatever else, but don’t even hint at a link between the Scottish independence movement and the ethnic nationalists in other parts of Europe, often on the ugly, anti-immigrant far right.”

Interestingly, however, given the salience of nationalism to Scotland, the newspaper in the two months studied barely covers nationalism in those other parts of Europe.

For The Herald, the only nationalists worth covering tend to be those in Scotland and little or no explanation of the term is deemed to be required.

Of the four items which did refer to nationalists outside Scotland, only one was a news story: concerning Iran (because they were not explicitly called “Iranian nationalists” they

have not been recorded in the country identifier column, but they were described as “extreme” nationalists: and recorded as such). Two of the other items were book reviews and one was a television review – in which the term “white nationalist” was used to describe far-right white supremacists in the US. One of the book reviews referred to “blinkered nationalists”.

The Herald therefore presents nationalists in Scotland as part of the political mainstream, but when nationalism is taken out of its Scottish context it becomes more unpleasant – bracketed with extremists, racists and those who are blinkered.

There was no attempt, however, in the two months studied to offer any detailed explanation of the term nationalist, either inside or outside Scotland. The differentiation in meaning is simply presented.

Table 2. The Guardian (77 articles in which there were a total of 112 references to nationalist/nationalists)

General description	Country identifier	Other identifier	No description/neutral
Ultra (8)	Scottish (7)	Pan-Arab/Arab (3)	36
Right-wing/coalition of the right (4)	Welsh	Sinhalese	
Hardline/hardliners (2)	Turkish	Cornish	
Extreme/extremists (6)	Serbia’s/Serb (3)	Hindu	
Fervent/fervour (2)	Irish	Pashtun	
Wilder demands of	Spanish	SDLP (3)	
Fierce	Bangladesh	Chiang Kai-Sheck’s (2)	
Clinically murder	Iranian	Muslim black	
Fanatical	Somali		
Instability	Chinese (2)		
Suspected	British		
Conservative	Iraqi		
Fringe	German		
Supra-	Algerian (2)		
Romantic	Ukranian		
Intellectual	Mexicans		
Backlash	Morrocان		
Good			

In contrast to The Herald, most of The Guardian’s coverage of nationalists focuses on foreign affairs – ie non-UK affairs. Immediately then this supports the view presented by Billig that nationalism is presented as surplus to the UK; that it is a matter for others.

The one occasion on which British appears next to nationalism is a reference to a publication of the far-right British National Party. In the period sampled the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown is never described as a British nationalist even when he is

reported as strongly supporting the British state against the attempts of the SNP to establish an independent Scotland. In an editorial on January 17 Gordon Brown's position of defending Great Britain is explicitly contrasted to the "nationalists on both sides of the border." Support for the idea of a British nation state is therefore clearly excluded from being a nationalist position, which is reserved in this article for those trying to establish a Scottish nation state, and those in England happy for such a state to be formed.

Large mainstream European countries are also excused from being labeled as nationalists (the references to Germany and Spain are historical). Nationalism is largely the preserve of the Balkans and countries in Asia and African countries.

The descriptions used are generally negative. As a liberal, left-leaning newspaper calling the nationalists "right-wing" is clearly not complimentary. Nationalists are also described at times as ultra or extreme.

The one occasion when a word that seems unambiguously positive is placed next to nationalist "good" is in fact used in an ironic way – the journalist talks about a Serbian politician being a good nationalist, in the way that you might describe a "good thief"; the word is not used to convey a sense of positive morality – rather his efficiency at pandering to a particular constituency.

The coverage of Serbian elections in January 2007 is worth highlighting. In the news story of January 22, the reporter refers to the success of extreme nationalist, but also refers to an alternative nationalist figure – Prime Minister Kostunica – who is described as a "conservative nationalist". It is not made clear what the difference between an extreme or conservative nationalist is.

However in the rest of the article a distinction is drawn between opponents of nationalists, who are labeled as liberal, pro-European; whereas the defining characteristic of the nationalists is their determination to retain Kosovo as part of Serbia. This therefore tells us that nationalists are illiberal and anti-European, and defined primarily by their determination not to allow Kosovo to secede. The comparison with the coverage of nationalism in the UK in the same paper is striking. In the British context Mr Brown is contrasted with nationalists precisely because of his opposition to a secessionist movement; whereas in Serbia those politicians campaigning to present secession are themselves defined as nationalists.

Although when used in connection with Scotland nationalism is clearly about an independence movement, nationalists elsewhere are described in a variety of confusing contexts – they are for example presented as religious segregationists (Hindu nationalists); anti-colonialists (Arab nationalists); murderers (Turkey) or concerned about foreign influence (China and Somalia).

Although in the anti-colonial strand in particular there is a sense of a justified nationalist position, for the most part nationalism is ill-defined and presented as alien and irrational and certainly surplus to the world of normal, developed nation states.

Table 3. The Daily Telegraph (36 articles in which there were a total of 43 references to nationalist/nationalists)

General description	Country identifier	Other identifier	No description/neutral
Ultra (3)	Scottish (4)	Viet Minh	11
Far-right (2)	Scottish and Welsh (3)	Hindu	
Hard-line	Turkish (2)	Maori	
Sabre-rattling	Welsh	Arab	
uncompromisingly	English		
Violent	China's		
Moderate	Serbia's		
Community			
Revolt			
Ardent			
Secular			
Colonial			

The Telegraph was less interested in nationalists than The Guardian, but in its reporting the term was again associated with generally unpleasant descriptions and foreign countries.

There were no references at all to British nationalism. In a comment piece in which the future of the British state was discussed, there was a reference to English nationalists – a group presented as arguing that Scotland would “go bust” as an independent country. The article was supportive of the continuance of the United Kingdom but this was not recognized as British nationalism.

Again, similar to The Guardian, nationalism was not associated with the governing parties of established European states. When reporting on Serbia, the language is also similar to The Guardian's – the choice in the elections is framed as a contest between a “pro-European liberal” future or nationalism. Nationalism is therefore once again associated with a backward, isolationist and dangerous movement.

The distinction drawn by many western mainstream politicians between patriotism and nationalism has been discussed earlier in this paper. However in an article on Serbia, patriotism is presented as being part of the nationalist family: “...patriotism finds its most extreme expressions in the Radical Party, a major ally of Milosevic and which has not given up his vision of a Greater Serbia.” Nationalism in Serbia is therefore presented, among other things, as aggressive expansionism. This use of patriotism together with nationalism will be discussed further in the conclusion below.

Whereas The Guardian uses the term “right-wing” to suggest nationalist extremism, The Daily Telegraph uses the term “far-right”. This may be explained by the fact that The Daily Telegraph supports the right of centre British Conservative Party and therefore needs to add in the term “far” to a movement or political party to demonstrate its unacceptability. Other words used – such as violent, hard-line and sabre-rattling are again used to convey a sense of nationalist aggression. A Bulgarian party is given the

label nationalist for its hostile comments about Jews and racist attitude towards Roma gypsies.

Nationalism is extended on some occasions to ethnic or religious groups, including on one occasion Maoris in New Zealand. This article is worth dwelling on for the evidence it provides in relation to Billig's point about nationalism being surplus to established countries such as the UK and projected on to others.

The Maoris in question are first described as simply "Maori politicians" but are then transformed into "Maori nationalists" because of a demand to limit immigration to New Zealand from "mainly white countries" such as Britain, the US and Canada. Ascribing the term nationalist to politicians because they call for limits to immigration seems an odd decision for a British newspaper reporter. The UK Conservative Party – the party that Daily Telegraph supports - has, for a number of years, expressed concern at the rate of immigration to the UK and has called for a reduction. Should the Conservatives therefore be classified as British nationalists?

The paper also, on occasion refers to nationalists in more reasoned terms. In an editorial on Northern Ireland, it writes about "moderate nationalists", whose moderation it is implied, comes from the fact that they are not traditional supporters of Sinn Fein (the Irish Republican party associated with the IRA). Nationalism on this occasion does seem to be acceptable. The Daily Telegraph appears to be relying on reader's knowledge of what moderate nationalists in an Irish context are – presumably supporters of Irish unity, who reject violence as a means of achieving that unity.

Conclusion

To be a nationalist in the three newspapers studied can mean different things: someone who supports a secessionist movement; someone who opposes a secessionist movement; a religious segregationist, a defender of national or group culture, a racist, and various other causes or beliefs.

It can often also mean being bracketed with extremists, ultras and the far-right. For journalists, working under the professional imperatives of needing to make sometimes complex issues easily understandable and of telling stories in a succinct manner, labels such as nationalist are clearly useful. It seems hard, however, to argue that by using the term nationalist in so many contexts this is aiding the understanding of readers.

It may well be that on many of these occasions the individuals and groups described would be happy to be referred to as nationalists (although presumably less content with being labeled as extremists or ultras). Journalists may then argue that they are offering accurate descriptions. But it is revealing that these groups are very rarely described as patriots, a term frequently used as an accolade by those who denounce nationalism. The extremists identified by The Guardian in its coverage of Serbia are officially The Serbian Radical Party – not the Serbian Nationalist Party, but it is nationalist, rather than, say, patriot, that is the term used to convey meaning. The headline for one article reads: *Nationalists triumph in Serbian elections: voters spurn western pleas to shun extremists*. If the first word of the headline had read *Patriots*, instead of *Nationalists* that

would clearly have presented a different meaning to readers conditioned to the idea of patriotism as a positive attribute, but would it have been any less (or more?) accurate. It is clear that, as Billig suggests, nationalism is presented as a generally alien and often irrational concept. The use of the word extreme or ultra is a good illustration of this point. The leaders of all the main UK political parties, for example, say maintaining the union between England and Scotland and therefore the current British state is of the utmost importance to them. The SNP is harshly criticized for the damaging consequences that Scottish independence would mean for the unity of the United Kingdom. Does that then mean the leaders of UK Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democratic parties are extreme or ultra-nationalists because they are so committed to protecting Great Britain? According to the newspapers studied here they are not nationalists at all – a concept they are said to be opposed to. Many of the groups covered by the newspapers are indeed clearly extreme and far-right, but surely it would be better to find a more precise way of explaining how they are extreme rather than grasping for the catch-all term “nationalist.” Through the coverage of “nationalist” movements outside the UK, it is clear that the newspapers are helping to foster a consensus – that nationalism is essentially a concept surplus to mainstream reasonable political discussion. Nationalists associated with independence movements within the UK are generally depicted as being less unpleasant, if of little interest to the two UK-wide papers. However, with a referendum on Scottish independence now firmly on the agenda, the generally hostile characterization of nationalism in the British press is certainly a convenient situation for those British patriots striving to ward off the threat from Scottish nationalists.

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