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Flexible Nationalisms: Applying Anthony D. Smith's Theory to the Irish Case

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Abstract

Anthony D. Smith, in one of his earlier, less debated, works – *Nationalism in the 20th Century* (1979) – examines phases of nationalism in the modern era, suggesting that nationalism has taken various forms before and during the 20th century. He argues that nationalism's adaptability is at the core of its persistence, adapting to changing situations such as fascism and communism. As a result of this adaptability, nationalism still flourishes today. This article applies Smith's theory to explore the interplay between cultural and material factors in the evolution of nationalism in Ireland. It identifies five ideological phases – revolutionary nationalist, protectionist, liberalising, neoliberal, and ecological – to which nationalism has adapted, and within which nationalism has influenced various aspects of Irish society. These phases are situated within a broader ideological and material context, analysing obliquely the Irish language (a core element of Irish nationalism), and related to changing processes of individualization.

Keywords: Nationalism; Ireland; Ideology; Irish language; National identity

Introduction

In 1979, notably before the pivotal year of 1983 that witnessed the release of three works shaping modern theories of nationalism – Ernest Gellner's (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's (1983) *The Invention of Tradition*, and Benedict Anderson's (1983) *Imagined Communities* – Anthony D. Smith (1979) published *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, a remarkably prescient book. While many often overlook this contribution, focusing instead on his other important works like *The Ethnic Revival* (Smith 1981), *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Smith 1986), *National Identity* (Smith 1991), *Nationalism and Modernism* (Smith 1998), *Chosen Peoples* (Smith 2003), *The Cultural Foundations of Nations* (Smith 2008), and *The Nation Made Real* (Smith 2013), it holds a significant place in the literature.

In *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* Smith argues that nationalism became a paramount political force, enduring beyond ideologies like communism, fascism, and racism. He posits that a key strength of nationalism lies in its adaptability. Distinct from other ideologies, nationalism is not restricted to particular doctrines, classes, or locales, allowing it to adapt to a range of socio-cultural contexts and to manifest as their natural evolution. This versatility enables it to incorporate other movements without compromising its foundational tenets. This has happened in recent years, when nationalism not only adapted to new ideologies, such as neoliberalism, in its global ascendancy, but somehow surfed its wave establishing a kind of "mutualistic symbiosis", a relationship between two species in which both benefit from the association. This is evident in Trump's America,

Bolsonaro's Brazil, Orban's Hungary, Meloni's Italy and Johnson's UK. These movements could also be interpreted as nationalism's antithetical response to neoliberalism's emphasis on global interconnectedness, coupled with the advance of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, often seen to have peaked in the late-20th and early-21st centuries.

Nationalism can adapt to two opposing ideologies. This suggests nationalism's reactive adaptation, or flexibility, as Smith would describe it, to increasing pressures of significant events such as globalization, migration, civil rights movements, and heightened awareness of race, ethnicity, and cultural identity. Indeed, new waves of nationalism could represent a counter-movement that demonstrates the adaptability of nationalism, integrating symbiotically with movements like neoliberalism, such that nationalism and other ideologies reinforce each other.

This article, exploring phases of nationalism in Ireland from before independence (1922), draws heavily on Smith's (1979) perspectives, especially nationalism's capacity to adapt and to integrate into a range of other ideologies, such as neoliberalism, without compromising its core principle. We call this capacity the "ideological-flexibility principle" of nationalism. Its foundational premise, à la Smith, is that nationalism is far from a static ideology; it evolves both on a global scale and locally within nation-states. In this article we look in more detail at Ireland to demonstrate the malleability of nationalism discussed by Smith (1979): "Nationalism .. answers to ideological, cultural, social and political aspirations and needs. Its success over two centuries is partly attributable to the range of needs that it satisfies. But equally important is the manner in which nationalists can adapt the vision, the culture, the solidarity and the programme to diverse situations and interests" (Smith 1979: 4).

Studying the development of nations through this prism proves highly insightful, as ideologies, including nationalism, have impacts on diverse facets of society, such as the political, economic, social, and cultural spheres.

Smith (1979) uses the terms stages and phases of nationalism. We employ his phases of nationalism to understand nationalism in Ireland before independence, but we focus more specifically on his three stages of the bureaucratic cycle (Smith 1979: 166-83) of nationalism as the foundation for our phases of nationalism in Ireland from the late-19th century until the time of the publication of his book (1979). We position those stages within a wider ideological context and examine, in particular, the Irish language and processes of individualization as a way of understanding some of the cultural dynamics of nationalism and its malleability within changing ideological phases. In the latter part of this article, covering the period since 1979, we argue that, rather than returning to the romantic protests of the first stage of the bureaucratic cycle, nationalism in Ireland has continued through two further phases, which we position within wider ideological changes.

Smith argues that "[t]he central theme of this book is the revival and re-emergence of nationalism in the twentieth century, despite the serious challenges from other faiths" (Smith 1979: 4). We argue that since its inception nationalism has not gone away; it has been here all along – adapting to the current ideological context, sometimes less explicit and banal (Billig 1995), and sometimes more explicit.

Through the lens of the Irish language (policy etc) we examine the flexibility of nationalism to adapt to ideological changes at the national and international levels. This article advances the argument that since the 19th century, Ireland has gone through five[1] ideological phases of nationalism, each lasting a generation and deeply affecting the country. We examine each of them with a particular focus on a key marker of Irish nationalism – the Irish language (which we use for illustrative purposes). Language tends to be a central prop of nationalism (see Fishman 1995 [1973]: 158f on "Language as (part of) the message of nationalism"). Expanding on Smith's argument that nationalism "stands midway between purely local movements like populism and nativism, and the great 'world salvation' ideologies of racial fascism and socialism or communism" (Smith 1979: vii), we argue that the wider national and international ideological context of the time influences the shape of nationalism. Central to our argument is that the ideological context, and the type of

nationalism, of the time is a force that influences aspects of the nation, such as a national language like the Irish language. We argue that the state plays an important role in this, and that as the ideological context changes it can be separated into phases for research purposes.

Nationalism in the Twentieth Century falls within Smith's modernist phase, during which he focused more on the state and politics, while in his later work he took an ethnosymbolic approach, focusing more on culture. We employ his Nationalism in the Twentieth Century in an effort to look across the grain at the more cultural aspects of ideology, along the lines of Malešević (2006: 3), who argued that his

> aim in this book to be distinctly uncool by opting for ideology over identity. This however is not done for the sake of resisting a fashion or out of some personal rebellion. On the contrary, my initial research objective was identity … [but] … the concept of identity is conceptually and operationally deeply porous … [and] … has become a powerful ideological device wielded as much by academics as political entrepreneurs, social movements or state institutions.

Thus we maintain that, on one side of the coin, to better understand nationalism's cultural and identity aspects it can be approached from a wider perspective of the state, politics and economics, and, on the obverse, to better understand those wider ideological dimention of nationalism, it can be approached from the perspective of culture and identity. In this article, similar to Malešević, our focus is more on the former than the latter, and hence our use of Smith's earlier book, as well as to shine a light on this less-used work. We endeavour to understand the flexibility of nationalism manifest in its cultural and identity aspects, and we see an explanation for this in the wider state and international context. We also endeavour to argue that both this wider context, and the narrower context of culture and identity, are ideological (a point that is not at odds with Malešević), and that this combination of wider and narrower (grounded nationalism) enables nationalism's flexibility.

The other marker we utilise is individualization. In Smith (1979) we see a movement from a nationalism in which the individual is submerged in the nation (in romantic nationalism, for example) to more recent nationalisms in which individuals bear the dignity of their community (Smith 1979: 3 and 152, see also Taylor 1998). We argue that a central process throughout the five ideological phases of nationalism in Ireland is individualization – a sociological process in which the individual is regarded less as an expression of the group (Beck 2002) and more as a bearer of personal qualities and accomplishments (Honneth 2004). We outline individualization (below), drawing on the work of authors such as Honneth (2004), Inglehart and Welzel (2005), and Beck (2002). We note a process of change from a focus on the masses and groups, before and during the early years of the State, through an emerging individualism in the middle of the century, to a more radical individualism under the neoliberal ideology, at the turn of the millennium, and perhaps a more nuanced individualism emerging today. Although the current ideological phase is unclear, we speculate that the process of individualization may continue into this phase in what one might call a more ecological form that could involve cosmopolitan traits, perhaps linked to a process of singularization (Reckwitz 2020).

For the sake of clarity, and expanding on Smith, what we mean by ideology is not just a group of ideas, but the wider context. Combining Durkheim (1938 [1895]), Mannheim (1936) and Thompson (1994) we see ideology as a nexus of ways of acting, thinking, and feeling, that intersects with positions of power embedded in a broader economic climate, within the context of a wider world view. This implies that there are patterns (of acting, thinking, and feeling); in some cases these patterns are explicit and evident, but in other cases they are taken for granted: "just the way 'we' do things"; these patterns are apparent (or sometimes less so) in the interactions between people within a nation, but also in the policy of the nation-state, its legislation and the manner in which the nation-state deals with financial and economic matters. That said, this article focuses on nationalism as an ideology characterised by such constantly evolving patterns, including those associated with language. These patterns shape the nation, or rather a certain version of a nation, imbuing it with

specific characteristics during a particular period and in a particular place. Most importantly, they are fundamental to the sense of belonging that is also always in flux, shaping a continually changing national "we". The wider period and place are the broader ideological context within which that national "we" exists, and the broader and narrower act on each other, but in this article (as we mentioned above) our focus is more on the former (think of the structure-agency problem of examining both at the same time or the problem in physics known as Heisenberg's indeterminacy principle).

In the next section we discuss the theoretical and conceptual context, and in the following section we outline five ideological phases of nationalism in Ireland, and develop our argument by focusing on the relationship between nation and state and the effect that this has on the national language.

Theoretical framework

Anthony D. Smith's stages of nationalism

Smith's work is known for its significant contributions to theories of nationalism. Among his many works, he is widely recognized for the ethnosymbolic[2] approach to nation-building, which emphasises the importance of pre-modern symbols and myths as cultural foundations of nations (Smith 2009). A less explored aspect of Smith's early works, the focus of this article, involves categorising national formation into distinct phases and stages. In his 1979 work, he identifies three phases of nationalism. The first phase, termed "pre-romantic", spanned from the 1750s to the Napoleonic era (Smith 1979) (the period of the French Revolution and of the United Irishmen).This phase was characterised by efforts to unite people through cultural homogenization, creating shared culture, symbols, and values, and sometimes involved reviving or inventing traditions and myths, concepts also explored by other authors in later works (Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Greenfeld 1992; Hutchinson 2001; Guibernau 2003; and earlier in Kedourie 1960). While French nationalism had a pronounced "civic" dimension, focusing on shared political values and citizenship, an alternative "ethnic" nationalism emerged in the German states during the second phase – beginning with the wars of resistance against Napoleon and continuing until 1848 (Smith 1979: 8) – characterised by kinship claims rooted in shared culture (Roshwald 2016: 1). Smith's third phase, from 1848 to the 1890s, was one of traditionalist nationalisms (Smith 1979: 9).

In addition to these three phases, Smith (1979: 180-2) also outlines stages in the bureaucratic cycle of nationalism – romantic protest, nation-building, and bureaucratic nationalism – which we will see reflected in the phases of nationalism in Ireland up to 1979, following which we depart from Smith's bureaucratic cycle to argue that there are further ideological (and accompanying nationalist) phases in Ireland since 1979.

Nationalists have bound images of nations to dreams of sovereignty, bringing together territory, economy, language, ethnicity and history. The corollary of binding nationalist aspirations to dreams of sovereignty has been the expectation, and the political principle, holding "that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (Gellner 1983: 1; see also Connor 1978: 373; Anderson 1983; and Weber 1948: 179). The concept of nation then produces "the effect of unity by virtue of which the people will appear, in everyone's eyes, 'as the people'" (Balibar 1991: 93; as an imagined community, Anderson 1983). Ominously, this creates ambiguity between citizenship and nation, civic and ethnic. While civic nationalism implies inclusivity, based on shared political values and principles, ethnic nationalism implies exclusivity, focusing on inherent characteristics like ancestry and culture. This ambiguity often leads to tensions within and between nations. In multi-ethnic societies the push for a unifying civic nationalism can clash with ethnic groups seeking recognition and autonomy based on their distinct identities. Similarly, a shift towards ethnic nationalism can marginalise or exclude those who do not fit the ethnic group, potentially leading to social fragmentation and conflict.

Moreover, the overlap and interplay between these two forms can lead to complex national narratives. A nation might officially promote civic nationalism but still harbour strong undercurrents of ethnic nationalism, influencing its politics and social dynamics.

We argue à la Gellner that nationalism is "primarily a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (Gellner 1983: 1), and that the national unit is principally cultural. Therefore, on the one hand, it is necessary to understand the cultural aspects of the nation (as Smith does in his ethnosymbolist approach), but, on the other hand, to also examine its political dimension. As Guibernau argued: "a fully-fledged theory of nationalism ought to examine the political as well as the cultural aspects of nations and national identity … a systematic and thorough political analysis has to complement the richness and insights provided by the ethnosymbolist approach" (Guibernau 2004: 126) and that "the dissociation between the cultural and the political aspects of nations and national identity casts some doubts over the ability of ethnosymbolism to capture the full meaning of nations and national identity in modern societies" (Guibernau 2004: 141). While it is difficult to examine the political and cultural dimensions simultaneously, we maintain that a return to Smith's more political approach in his 1979 work gives us some insights into the changing political aspects of nationalism that we can use to better understand changes in the cultural aspects of nationalism (using the Irish language as our example in this article).

Ideology, nationalism, and nation

Although Smith (1979) uses the term ideology to describe nationalism, he does not define ideology. We aim to address this omission, as ideology characterises the essence of nationalism.

Brubaker argues that "[i]f we understand nationhood not as fact but as claim, then we can see that 'nation' is not a purely analytical category. It is not used to describe a world that exists independently of the language used to describe it. It is used, rather, to change the world, to change the way people see themselves, to mobilize loyalties, kindle energies, and articulate demands" (Brubaker 2004: 116). That subjective claim according to Renan (Renan 1996 [1882]: 53) is recreated in "a daily plebiscite". We see national practices as ideological. Borrowing from the philosophical tradition, one could argue that ideology relates to the world of phenomena, thus to the world as it appears to us, not *noumena*, the things as they are independent of our perception (Zahavi 2007). As such, ideology does not describe the "real world", but rather the perception and interpretation of it. From this standpoint, nationalism as an ideology can be seen as a set of imaginary relationships of individuals to other individuals, groups and the natural world, interpreting the self as a national self, immersed in a world appearing, naturally, as a world of nations (Posocco and Watson 2022). In such a world, people are national people, each having a distinct nationality, with a national language. Mountains and rivers are national mountains and national rivers that can (and do) become real political entities, i.e., elements marking national territorial borders. Together with trees and plants, they become national symbols. For example, the shamrock, or Trifolium, is a national symbol of Ireland. The same is true for the sessile oak (Quercus petraea), which was declared the national tree of the Republic of Ireland by Taoiseach Charlie Haughey in 1990. In Japan, Mount Fuji functions in the same way as the oak tree in Ireland. The United States of America has Mount Rushmore or the Yosemite Valley and Sequoia National Park. And so on, in any country, people identify with such symbols, which become an integral part of the nation, characteristics they share.

From this perspective, a nation is a group of people who have, or believe they have, shared characteristics; the key point being that "what ultimately matters is not *what is* but *what people believe is*" (Connor 1978: 379, italics in original). Belief is linked to imagination, which in turn links to nation as an imagined community (Anderson 1983): "a state of mind" (Kohn 1944). The subjective (shared identity) construction is the *sine qua non* of collective (national) experience.

While all the members of a group called the nation see the world in the same way, the ideology of nationalism can also be used to the advantage of some. This is similar to Thompson's critical conception of ideology which "is primarily concerned with the ways in which symbolic forms intersect with relations of power. It is concerned with the ways in which meaning is mobilized in the social world and serves thereby to bolster up individuals and groups who occupy positions of power" (Thompson 1994: 135). In this way ideology is (also) about the use of meaning to the advantage of certain groups. Smith, in a later work (Smith 1998), identified, for example, the intelligentsia as a category that has "the will and inclination, but also especially the power and capacity to apply and disseminate the ideas produced by the intellectuals" (Conversi 2006: 22). Similarly, authors such as Hroch (1993: 3-20), Hobsbawm (1972) and Nairn (1974: 57-82) argue that specific disaffected groups, such as the petit bourgeoisie, via their intelligentsia, employ nationalism to recruit the masses.

For clarity, recruitment often involves belonging and membership, two concepts related to nationalism that are only apparently identical (Brubaker 2010; Geddes & Favell 1998). Unlike membership (which is epitomised in citizenship), belonging is "actively lived, as a concept, because it is achieved by being and doing in the world" (Knott 2017: 3). Nationalism provides individuals with circumstances in which emotional bonds are created with fellow nationals they never meet, thus forming the "imagined nation" (Anderson 1983). Nationalism situates the source of individual identity within the people, as the bearer of sovereignty and the basis of communal solidarity. The subjective aspect of nationalism is manifest in its practice; in the culture and sentiment associated with the "nation". That is to say, the national "we" is inextricably linked to the national "self", and vice-versa.

Closely related to the concept of belonging is the symbolic boundary of the nation. Irish national identity is contrasted with British (mainly English): e.g., Gaelic football, hurling, the Irish language and Catholicism are held against soccer, rugby, the English language and Protestantism. Barth (1969: 9–37) argued that ethnic identities are best understood by their boundaries. Armstrong, following Barth (1969), argued that boundaries can last a long time, that it is possible for an ethnic group to continue, even if its defining characteristics change, e.g., an Irish nation can continue to exist without the Irish language. Nationalists have recognized this – for example, Sabino Arana (1865-1903), who founded the Basque Nationalist Party in the 1890s, claimed that "[s]peaking one language or another is not important. Rather the difference between languages is the means of preserving us from the contagion of Spaniards and avoiding the mixing of the two races" and (with a flourish of hyperbole) even suggested "speaking Russian, Norwegian or some other language unknown to them" (Quoted in Heiberg 1980: 51).

Difference is subjective and constructed: "no nation possesses an ethnic base naturally, but as social formations are nationalized, the populations included within them … [are] represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community" (Balibar 1991: 95, italics in original). The subjective element of the nation is vital. Without it there would be no mass in the mass movement so central to nationalism.

Individualism

Smith claims that "[i]n much of the literature … nationalism is classified as … authoritarian collectivism" (as opposed to individualism) despite evidence within nationalism of "economic individualism" on the right and "political individualists" on the left (Smith 1979: 150). Authors such as Honneth (2004), Inglehart and Welzel (2005), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), Reckwitz (2020) and others see individualization as a process, e.g., Inglehart and Welzel (2005: 2-3), with a rather cosmopolitan perspective, suggest that socio-economic development leads to cultural shifts marking a transition from collective discipline and conformity to individual liberty, human diversity, and autonomy, a phenomenon they term "self-expression values" (2005: 2-3).

In this context of interconnected processes of individualization and cosmopolitanization, nationalism (that flexible ideology) is evident on both sides: nationalism can be cosmopolitan insofar as "[i]t aims to build a nation, to construct a world of nations, each free and self-governing, each unique and cohesive, each able to contribute something special to a plural humanity" (Smith 1979: 29), however, at the same time, the cosmopolitan "hopes for an early withering-away of nationalism" (Smith 1979: x) and therefore "[c]osmopolitanism is the real enemy of nationalism" (Smith 1979: 192). Following Beck and Sznaider (2006), we can see a form of "cosmopolitan individualism" emerging in the context of the environmental risks faced by humanity, but we can also see the potential for nationalism to adapt.

We can also link the process of individualization with the work of Reckwitz on singularization. He argues that "[i]n late modernity the subject is not just responsible for themselves, as is typically suggested by the term 'individualization,' but strives above all to be unique" (Reckwitz 2020: 141) as "singularity always involves a certain performance, it is enacted in front of an audience" (Reckwitz 2020: 145).

These perspectives provide a theoretical lens through which to understand ideology i.e., what is going on around the picture, outside the frame, what happened before to bring about that situation, and even allow us to hazard a guess as to what could happen afterwards. With these perspectives in mind we turn our attention to nationalism in Ireland, in the past century and more.

Five ideological phases of Irish nationalism since before independence

The revolutionary nationalist ideology (from mid-/late-19th century until 1922)

We mentioned above that Smith outlines a number of phases of nationalism in the 18th and 19th centuries: a "pre-Romantic" phase "from the 1750s until its diffusion under Napoleon … The second phase opens with the wars of resistance against Napoleon and lasts till 1848 … [and a third phase] From 1848 to the 1890s, [in which] traditionalist nationalisms constituted a powerful force in European politics" (Smith 1979: 7-9). In Ireland, Hutchinson (2001) identifies three phases that overlap somewhat with Smith's three phases: the first and second phases, in the late-18th century, are rather antiquarian-mythical and more academic, respectively, followed by a third phase that is more nationalist. In the first two phases, the Irish nation is presented as civically and politically British and English-speaking, but with some Irish distinctiveness provided by antiquarian research. However, the phase beginning in the mid- to late-19th century was more nationalist. These three pre-independence ideological phases challenged the state and status quo, whereas the four ideologies examined below are post-independence, and involve the independent State in the creation and maintenance of the nation.

Another way in which Smith presents the changing nature of nationalism is through three stages (as opposed to phases): romantic protest, which we observe pre-independence, then nation-building and bureaucratic nationalism, post independence (Smith 1979: 181). These stages fit our observations in Ireland; we position these stages in a wider ideological context.

Smith's first stage (romantic protest) aligns with our revolutionary nationalist ideological phase. Here we consider the late-19th and early-20th centuries as a nationalism of imagining (Anderson 1983) an Irish nation. The origins of this period are evident from the 1840s e.g., the Young Ireland movement, *The Nation* newspaper (both founded in 1842), and the Great Famine of the 1840s. The nationalist movement grew when the Home Rule League (founded in 1873) focussed on the question of land redistribution from the late-1870s. This period ended with independence in 1922. This phase included cultural aspects such as sports, dancing and language, but also the political movement for sovereignty. The cultural aspects involved not only revival, but also invention, such as the creation of rules for sporting and dancing as well as increased written output in the Irish language (see Delap 2007: 23-35). Central to this ideological phase was the project of political independence, justified by Irish culture. The Irish language was crucial to this project, and,

as we see in the work of Garvin (1987: 78-106), many of the same individuals were involved in both the Irish language-revival and political-nationalist movements.

The justification for political independence was that the Irish are a nation. The nation was described in opposition to British cultural traits, one of which was language. To claim that the Irish were a nation of Irish speakers was inaccurate, as the number of Irish speakers had declined for centuries. Although the linguistic decline could be blamed on the British, and used as additional justification for independence, there was also a movement to revive the Irish language. The small patchwork Irish-speaking region called the Gaeltacht was romanticized in nationalistic poetry, plays and paintings. Outside the Gaeltacht, Irish-language promoters travelled by bicycle to offer classes. At the national level the Irish language was introduced into the education system (initially as an extra-curricular subject) and as a requirement for entry into any college of the National University of Ireland (National Universities of Ireland Act 1908) – a requirement still in force today. All of this was prior to independence. The wider ideology of nationalism framed emerging attitudes and behaviour, as well as the legislation that was demanded and sometimes achieved.

Of course, to paint a picture of a single vision – uniting politics and culture, and the various strands within each – would be not only inaccurate, but would represent an inflexible nationalism. Our intention in this article is to demonstrate that nationalism is flexible, and that that flexibility facilitates its continuation stage after stage, phase after phase. In Ireland there have always been various manifestations of nationalism at any point in time. For example, through an analysis of speeches at "monster" meetings during the land wars of the 1880s (the speeches were printed in newspapers), Kane (2000: 246) was able to

> demonstrate that though discursive struggle pitted the constitutionalist discourse of 'concil-iation' (generally shared by moderate nationalists, bourgeois farmers and merchants, and the Catholic hierarchy) against the radical discourse of 'retribution' (the stance of radical nationalists, small farmers, activist intellectuals, and local clergy) both were based on the central symbolic themes of sacred land, the rights of the Irish to the land and the country, and the injustice of British and landlord domination.

She also argued that as a result of the intransigence and, to some extent, the coercive reaction of the British government, there was an increasing radicalization as many large farmers and senior clergy joined the land movement in the later 1880s (Kane 2000: 257).

We can see flexibility also evident during WWI, with Redmond's call on Irish nationalists to volunteer for the British army, in the hope of home rule after the war, compared to Sinn Féin's stance against conscription, or the lack of support for the Easter Rising 1916, at the time, but growing support in reaction to the executions afterwards, and the Rising becoming a canon of Irish nationalism post-independence.

The protectionist ideology (1922-1950s)

Prior to independence, nationalism was a subversive form of social movement in which the cultural aspects were employed as a political argument for home rule. After independence these cultural aspects were reinforced to support the legimation of the state in the form of established nationalism.

We call the first post-independence (after 1922) phase the protectionist ideology (the focus of this article is on the twenty-six county (Republic of) Ireland, rather than the whole island). The post-independence ideologies, to date, each lasted a generation (or about 30 years). The move from one ideology to the next is gradual, and elements of previous ideologies remain in subsequent ideological phases. In the previous revolutionary nationalist phase there had been a gradual move towards the nation forming the state, but in this ideological phase, aligning with Smith's second stage – nation-building – the state built the nation.

We argue that during each phase the ideology emanating from the state is evident in the various domains of society and, although not a monolithic force, is the primary or emerging perspective of

the time. During this phase, the protectionist perspective undergirded economic, political and cultural perspectives of government, not only of Cumann na nGaedheal in the 1920s, but even more so of Fianna Fáil in the 1930s and 1940s. We see this protectionist ideology as nationalist insofar as the state took this approach in its project to create and maintain the nation.

During this protectionist phase the nation is viewed as a single mass, and we can see this reflected in many of the policies and efforts. During this phase the institutions of state and civil society were rather authoritarian. A central goal of the State was to preserve unity and stability following the turmoil of the war of independence and the civil war. The focus was on building the nation by defending "symbol, myth, memory, value and tradition" (Smith 2009: 25) and maintaining its symbolic boundary (see Barth 1969).

From Gellner's (1983) perspective, nationalism plays a crucial role in the process of homogenising industrial society. In Ireland, the protectionist ideology was evident in the tariff walls the new state erected to protect Irish industry and, in particular, to protect agriculture; as well as cultural protection, such as the promotion of Gaelic sports, the Irish language, etc. Bourdieu (2014) called this a process of building a state machinery of national emotions made of institutions and organisations providing citizens with national identity also through national production, and overall a sense of belonging to the nation.

The Irish state made concerted efforts to promote the Irish language by integrating it into the education system for all children and ensuring exposure to it in mass media, including radio and newspapers. This was evident in the operation of radio stations like 2RN in the 1920s and Radio Éireann in the 1930s, as well as in educational policies. These policies included intensive training of teachers in Irish, making proficiency in the language a requirement for passing the Leaving Certificate examination, and enforcing Irish-language proficiency for entry and promotion in the Civil Service.

The protectionist ideology was particularly apparent in the media. A White Paper on broadcasting was published in November 1923 (even though the civil war had ended only months before). The Postmaster-General argued that establishing a radio station was necessary to shield the newly formed Irish nation from the influence of British broadcasts and their detrimental effects on Irish language, culture and values. During a later parliamentary debate, the Postmaster General informed the Dáil (30 November 1926) that there would be a channel for the Gaeltacht region (this did not happen until 1972), and in response, Conor Hogan (of the Farmers' Party) argued on 7 December 1926 that feeding the people in the Gaeltacht "would be better than giving them a wireless station" (Dáil Debates, 17(7)). Such debates about a radio station in the face of economic hardship demonstrates the importance of cultural concerns in creating the nation.

State policy during this period deepened the divide between native Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht and secondary-bilingual speakers, a difference that remains today. Government promotion of Irish in education and radio resulted in more secondary bilinguals. However, rather than preserving and revitalizing Irish in the Gaeltacht, the policy seemed geared to protecting it through the neglect and isolation of the region.

Although the pro- and anti-treaty positions during the civil war (1922-23) were reflected in the two main parties (Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael) for generations, the dominant nationalist ideology of the time is evident in them (although to varying degrees at different times).

The liberalising ideology (1950s-1980s)

In 1950s Ireland, nationalist ideology continued to play a significant role in shaping political and social developments (see Garvin 2004). However, by the 1950s it was clear that neither the nationalist nor the protectionist ideologies had succeeded – the nation was not Gaelic, nor Irish speaking, the island remained partitioned, the economy was in the doldrums, there was widespread poverty and mass emigration (see O'Dowd 1992). Despite the failure to achieve the nationalist objectives, the nation-building phase had been successful in creating what O'Dowd calls the state-

nation (a nation within the boundaries of the state), and we can see at this time a clearer movement into Smith's third phase of bureaucratic nationalism (Smith 1979: 181).

From the 1950s, a new generation of politicians gradually emerged, and the direction of the State and nation was questioned. Although the dominant ideology of the time was by no means liberal, it was an emerging ideology that led from an economic liberalization during this phase and, despite considerable inertia, later led to a more culturally liberal society in the subsequest stage we discuss below. Within the continuing authoritarian and restrictive society of the time, there were a few examples of the liberalising nationalist ideology in the cultural domain. Some ideological change is evident in discussions about the emerging medium of television, with a new focus on choice, gauged through audience measurement.

We call this the phase of liberalising ideology, which emphasises individual freedom and liberty, democracy, and free-market capitalism with a focus on attracting foreign investment and promoting economic growth. Although initially (in the 1950s) it played a less prominent role in Ireland compared to the legacy of the nationalist and protectionist ideologies, some Irish political parties and movements during this time were influenced by liberal ideas.

The liberalising ideology became more evident through the 1960s and into the 1970s, in the First Programme for Economic Expansion (1958–63), and in the elimination of some obligatory aspects of the Irish language such as the requirement to pass Irish in the leaving certificate, and the removal of the Irish-language requirement for recruits to the Civil Service (removed in 1973 and 1974, respectively) (see Watson and Nic Ghiolla Phádraig 2011: 447).

From around 1970 there was a re-emergence of more radical nationalism, such as in the Provisional Irish Republican Army, which used violence to achieve political goals, but the late-1960s onwards saw the emergence of nationalism more closely tied to issues of social justice, with many individuals and groups advocating for the rights of marginalised and disadvantaged communities. According to Tovey et al (1989: 25) there was "sustained critique by many leaders of Irish opinion, who, horrified by the violence of events in the North of Ireland, have turned to the condemnation of nationalism per se". Here we can see the difference between the establishment nationalism, coming from the state, and other forms of nationalism, such as the violent political nationalism just mentioned, and forms of more radical cultural nationalism, some of which was evident in the Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement.

In reaction to the Gaeltacht Civil Rights Movement the liberalising ideology was evident in the way the State treated the Gaeltacht communities: a new focus on minority rights, such as the right of the people of the Gaeltacht to have their own radio station (Raidió na Gaeltachta, began broadcasting in 1972), and employment (e.g., the 1970s' industrialization plan for the Gaeltact). This ideology was also evident in the opening up of the economy to international trade, as well as the increasing penetration of Anglo-American popular culture (particularly following the introduction of the second national television channel RTÉ2 in 1978).

Despite a change in ideology, elements of the national project persisted in policy and perception. This led to tension between the symbolic and practical importance of the Irish language. The shift towards a market-oriented perspective resulted in a shift from attempts to promote the use of Irish at a national level to tolerance or encouragement of its use at the group level. This was also evident in the Government's withdrawal of support for, and promotion of, Irish-language education, which led to a decrease in the number of Irish-language schools in the early part of this period. However, since around 1970 the trend was reversed thanks to civil-society initiative (as shown in Watson 2007: 367).

In 1977, RTÉ established an advisory committee on Irish-language broadcasting which claimed that a large portion of the population supported the use of Irish on television and radio. Despite this support, audience figures for Irish-language programmes were not high. While the symbolic importance of the Irish language to the nation was a factor in the justification for broadcasting programmes in Irish, the emphasis on the market within the liberalising ideology was in conflict with this. However, the emphasis on minority rights within the liberalising ideology helped to

justify providing a service for Irish speakers, including programmes for learners of Irish and a separate radio station for the Gaeltacht region.

The neoliberal ideology (1980s-2010s)

The neoliberal phase, although a new phase, contains (vestigial) elements of the previous phases. For example the claim in the Constitution (1937) "to exercise jurisdiction over the whole territory" (Article 3) which "consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas" (Article 3) was not amended until the Nineteenth Amendment of the Constitution (1999) following a referendum in 1998, subsequent to the Good Friday Agreement of that year.

Having passed through the three phases of revolutionary nationalism, protectionism and liberalism (reflecting Smith's stages of romantic protest, nation-building and bureaucratic nationalism, respectively), at this point, according to Smith, there can be a return to the first stage of romantic protest, with a "rejection of the bureaucratic approach" (Smith 1979: 175). Neoliberalism, which emerged in the period after the publication of Smith (1979), was an explicit rejection of the role of the bureaucratic state that resulted in what Foucault and Bourdieu defined as "state involution" and "conservative revolution" favoured by liberal capitalism (Laval 2018).

The rejection of the bureaucratic approach was also evident in "ecological movements … ethnic revival, women's liberation and neo-Marxism" (Smith 1979: 175). In Ireland, it was evident in the Gaeltacht movement, in civil society support for Irish-language schools, in a renaissance of Irish culture (sport, music and dance). There was also a tension around overtly nationalist expressions in the context of the violence in Northern Ireland (as mentioned above). We argue that in this phase we saw the rejection of the bureaucratic approach reinforced by neoliberalism, while the return to romantic protest was deflected by a fear of nationalist violence.

The 1980s saw the implementation of neoliberal economic policies, including deregulation, privatization, and the reduction of government spending, which aimed to promote economic growth and individual opportunity. These policies were influenced by the ideology of free-market capitalism, which advocates minimal government intervention in the economy and the maximization of individual freedom and opportunity. Many Irish politicians and citizens supported these policies, believing that they would promote economic growth and individual opportunity. However, these policies were not without controversy, and as a form of *enantiodromia*, one might argue that, liberalism in some ways became its opposite in neoliberalism, as it disproportionately benefited the wealthy and powerful, while also exacerbating inequality and social and economic divisions. Despite this, neoliberalism continued to be a dominant ideology in Ireland and other countries throughout the 1980s and beyond.

During the 1980s there was another economic crisis, and increased emigration, which raised questions about the liberalising approach. During this neoliberal phase Ireland's principal economic approach was to find its niche in the global economy. The economic success of this approach in Ireland became evident a decade later with the emergence of the "Celtic Tiger". As with the economic side, the neoliberal ideology also led to an effervescence of culture (although perhaps without the negative side-effects evident on the economic side). Perhaps reflecting the impetus noted by Smith as a return to romantic protest, there was an efflorescence of various cultural expressions; however in the Irish context this was evident not only in Gaelic culture, but also in the diversity of cultures brought by immigrants and by the penetration of global culture. As Malešević (2019: 152) noted,

> With the unprecedented economic growth experienced during the Celtic tiger years (mid-1990s to mid-2000s), Irish nationalism reflected this rising sense of national confidence.

He outlined examples of this national confidence in sports, the arts (including literature, music and film), dancing and national commemorations, as well as arguing that there was an "ever-rising prestige of Irishness in the wider world" (Malešević 2019: 157).

The ideology was also manifest in the Irish language in terms of the individualization evident in the Language Act (Official Languages Act 2003). It shows that there was a move from the view of the Irish language as an obligation to be imposed on the masses in the protectionist ideology, through a minority right in the liberalising ideology, to an individual right in the neoliberal ideology.

This new ideology was more market-oriented and placed a greater emphasis on individual rights rather than group rights. In relation to the Irish language, there was a shift towards recognizing the linguistic rights of individuals. However, elements of both the revolutionary nationalist and liberalising ideologies persisted, resulting in the Irish language retaining its presumptive privileged position, and group rights not being completely abandoned. For example, Irish remained a compulsory school subject, the state continued to support civil society opening new Irish-language schools each year, the state (through television licence fees) continued to support Irish-language radio (RnaG) and television (TG4).

The Irish-language television station TG4, which began broadcasting (as TnaG) in 1996, during the phase of neoliberal ideology, reflects this ideology in its development and direction. Pádhraic Ó Ciardha, who served as an adviser to the Ministers responsible for the station and later as Information Officer and Deputy Executive Officer of TG4, played a significant role in shaping the station. Before it began broadcasting, Ó Ciardha (personal interview: 19 February 1996) argued that TG4 would be a national channel for all (thanks to subtitles), rather than for Irish speakers generally or in the Gaeltacht. This aligns with the protectionist ideology, but also reflects the market-oriented approach of the liberalising ideology, as Ó Ciardha emphasized the need for the channel to attract a large audience or a smaller audience with more disposable income.

These concepts align with neoliberal ideology, where TG4's constrained resources and commissioning obligations exposed it to market forces. In addition, Ó Ciardha stated that TG4 would not be a tool for government language policy, needing to compete for ratings instead. This rather neoliberal stance ignited debate: some worried that segregating Irish on a separate channel was protectionist and isolating, while others, from a neoliberal viewpoint, argued that low viewership for Irish-language content did not warrant the spending (see Fitzgibbon 1993: 2). Despite these challenges, TG4 became the eighth most-watched channel in Ireland, with over half a million daily viewers (TG4 2012: 11-12), by also broadcasting programmes in English and providing subtitles in English for programmes in Irish, and catering to minority interests such as Gaeltacht culture.

Under the neoliberal ideology the trend towards individualization was reflected in the situation for many Irish speakers, who chose to speak Irish when they had the opportunity and desire to do so, rather than as a daily language of the community. For the majority of Irish speakers, the Irish language was not their everyday language of communication, but rather an intentional individual choice when the opportunity arose, opportunities that were often scattered across the media, civil society, and personal networks. Although in any community or neighbourhood in Ireland 10 per cent or more of the population have at least sufficient Irish to engage in a conversation in the language, the neoliberal approach to language policy has supported individual choice rather than community or public engagement with the language. The result has been that most Irish speakers have limited opportunities to speak Irish. As long as the education system is the primary means of transmitting the Irish language from one generation to the next, its survival will depend on its continued ideological importance, rather than its everyday use (see Watson and Posocco 2023 for a discussion of the Irish-language public sphere).

An ecological ideology? (2010s-2040s?)

By the late 1970s – at the time of Smith's (1979) book – Ireland had traversed Smith's three stages of romantic protest, nation-building and bureaucratic nationalism, and was poised to return to the first stage in the cycle. However, in the context of violence in Northern Ireland, nationalism was manifested in a more cultural form. Today one could argue that the emergence of many far-right movements and political parties, across many countries in Europe and beyond, partly fit Smith's

bureaucratic cycle as "the operations of the bureaucratic cycle, which throw up two kinds of nationalism today, a state-oriented nationalism and, by way of reaction, a romantic ethnic nationalism" (Smith 1979: 182-3). With less far-right manifestation than many neighbours across Europe, Ireland continues with its state-oriented nationalism.

At this moment in time it is difficult to see the shape of the ideology before it fully emerges. Increasing global integration, along with the transnational existential risks, suggest certain directions of the current ideological phase. Looking back we can see that before 2010 the neoliberal ideology, which had gained dominance globally, was being questioned as a result of precarity – economically in terms of both the instability of the global economy and in terms of problems of long-term (un)employment – and of further time-space compression leading to rapid changes: economic, social and cultural. In Ireland the Celtic Tiger economy "burst" in 2008 and led to a period of recession. The economic growth of the past few years could be argued to be quite similar to the neoliberal approach. However, there appears to be an ideological shift.

As well as a waning neoliberal ideology, we can see a departure from minority rights in the cosmopolitan process of individualisation away from regarding the individual as "a mere epiphenomenon of his culture" (Beck 2002: 37). This process, which Beck and Sznaider (2006) called "cosmopolitan individualism", suggests that there would be a requirement not only to protect linguistic diversity at the global level, but also at the local and national levels, as it involves a globalization from within, in which all individuals are of equal value. This equality is regardless of differences, including the speaking of different languages. For example, the Irish state would work to preserve the Irish language not just for a specific group of people, but for the benefit of the Irish community and even humanity as a whole. One place in which this is visible is in the role Irish could play in inverting the process of biocultural diversity loss, particularly in terms of linguistic homogenization and loss highlighted by a number of recent studies (Robertson 2014; Maffi 2005). Another place is in the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, under which the State takes responsibility to ensure that individual Irish speakers can interact with the State in the Irish language. In practical terms the Act prescribes, for example, recruitment of Irish speakers, monitoring of the usage of Irish and the provision of administrative forms and advertisements in the Irish language. This can create the environment in which the Irish language can become a working language in parts of the State administration, as well as facilitate dealings with the State by Irish speakers. In a sense, the objective here is to create Irish-speaking ecologies in the workplace, customer services and in the media.

We can also connect this ecological individualist perspective to the process of singularization. Reckwitz argued that "societies are being reconfigured based … on a social logic of particularity – a particularity … define[d] by means of the term singularity" (Reckwitz 2020: 142). Similarly, he argued that "what has become the focus of people's hopes and longings is not the standardized and regulated but the unique, the singular" (Reckwitz 2020: 141). Even before the current phase we could see early glimmers of an ecological, individual, singularized approach to the Irish language e.g., McCloskey's argument that the maintenance of the Irish language "is our contribution to a much larger effort, a global struggle to preserve a kind of diversity which human society has enjoyed for millennia, but which is being lost in our time" (McCloskey 2001: 41). More recently, Watson (in a speech given in Oideas Gael, Co. Donegal on 23 July 2018) argued that "*Cé gur teanga na hÉireann í an Ghaeilge, is seód chulturtha í a bhaineann leis an domhan*" [although Irish is the language of Ireland, it is a global cultural treasure belonging to the world].

We can see some aspects of this ideology evident in the ecological approach to the Irish language, evident, for example, in one of the terms of reference of Teacht Aniar (2023)'s campaign "Aeróg Éiceolaíoch" [ecological antenna], which states "*Go bhfuil na brúanna céanna ar an éagsúlacht teanga agus cultúrtha is atá ar an bithéagsúlacht agus ar an athrú aeráide*" [that linguistic and cultural diversity face the same pressures as biodiversity and climate change] (https://teachtaniar.eu/aerog/).

Another major change occurring at the moment is the impact of artificial intelligence and robotics. This may reinforce the individualization Beck noted, as each individual will be able to

choose the language with which to interact with and through computers, robots and other devices. Although still at an early stage there are already capabilities in the Irish language such as voice commands (like "*Múch*" and "*Atosaigh*" rather than "Switch off" and "Restart"), text-to-voice capability, chatbots, advertisements on streaming services, etc. These developments, while supporting the use of the Irish language globally, further reinforce the isolation of individual Irish speakers.

The changing ideological pressures were evident in the Irish-language station TG4's 2012 report. Reflecting the protectionist ideology, they pledged to support the Government in reviving the language ("*Tacú leis an Rialtas chun an Ghaeilge a athbheochan trí oibriú go dlúth leis ar chur i bhfeidhm na Straitéise 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge (2010-2030)*" [support the government in order to revive Irish through working closely with the government in order to implement the 20-Year Strategy for Irish (2010-2030)]. Reflecting a mixture of more liberal and cosmopolitan ideologies, they pledged to serve the culture of the whole island, of the Gaeltacht community and Irish-speaking families and even to provide an Irish-language service around the world (TG4 2012: 6)).

Looking from the more cultural (Irish language) to the more political aspect of nationalism, we note that in 2022 for the first time in Northern Ireland Sinn Féin became the largest party in the Assembly (Edwards *et al.* 2022) and Catholics became more numerous than Protestants (McClements 2022). The changed demographic and political landscape in Northern Ireland might lead to further changes that could result in changes in Irish nationalism. As O'Leary argued: "The Irish nation has been built on the premise that the norm is to be of Irish stock, Catholic, and favourably disposed towards the Irish language. This premise will have to be refurbished" (O'Leary 2022). Along those lines, a founding member of the Democratic Unionist Party, Wallace Thompson, said that "there's an inevitability in my mind that we are moving towards some form of new Ireland. Hopefully, new and not absorption… but we need to ask the questions and we need to ask for answers and we need to talk to people. That shouldn't mean then you're thinking that we're suddenly going down that road. We might not" (McBride 2023).

There are many dynamics (including developments in Northern Ireland) influencing the emerging current ideology and the effect it will have on the Irish language and national identity more generally, but we can see, as Smith observed, that, despite the increasing interconnectedness of the world, nationalism does, and probably will, retain its centrality (for the immediate future): "the persistence of nationalism, even after its initial political demands have been met and even after modernization is attained, is a function of the international system itself. Nationalism may initially have helped to create that system; now it is in turn maintained by that system" (Smith 1979: 187).

Conclusion

In Ireland, the ideological context has evolved from a focus on national independence, to an ideology of protectionism, with a focus on nation-building, to a more liberal focus on minority rights, to a neoliberal emphasis on individualism and finally to more nuanced individualism associated with global processes and existential risks. Despite the increasing individualism from phase to phase, the nation has remained central to people's sense of identity and belonging, evident, for example, in opinion polls, and nationalism has retained its role within the bureaucratic aspects of the state, for example, in the education system and the media, and evident in legislation.

Smith's stages of nationalism are not only evident in the creation, establishment and maintenance of a nation, but represent here a theoretical lens through which to look at Ireland and the Irish language. This article made use of such a lens to read the shift through various ideological phases. In earlier phases, efforts were made to create an Irish-speaking nation, which benefited those outside the Gaeltacht who could speak or learn the language. During that time (and since), the Gaeltacht region saw economic and linguistic decline. The liberalising phase brought some attention to the Gaeltacht and efforts to address its disadvantage, but also saw growth in the number of Irish speakers outside this region. The neoliberal phase coincided with the ideology of the individual, and the reality for most Irish speakers is that they are part of a scattering of individuals across the

country (with only a small percentage residing in Irish-speaking families and communities). In the current phase we see goverment efforts to create Irish-speaking ecologies for the Irish speakers scattered throughout the country and services in Irish for those concentrated in Gaeltacht regions. The current phase might involve a more ecological nationalist ideology, in relation to the changing situation globally – economically, socially, culturally, politically and environmentally – as well as locally, in relation to developments in Northern Ireland, and seeing cultural diversity on the island as synonymous with biodiversity.

We argued that the wider ideological context of state and politics has influenced the shape of Irish language legislation and policy, and, through them, the Irish-speaking environment. Elsewhere we argue that it is possible to look through the other end of the telescope to show how the Irish language (and other cultural and identity aspects of nationalism) act back upon the wider nationalism of politics and state, and the impact that can have on national (state) legitimation (see our paper on the hollowing out of national identity, forthcoming).

Finally, we have argued in this article that the malleability of nationalism has enabled it to persist through various ideological phases, revealing itself in various ways in everyday life, as well as in government policy and legislation. We employed the Irish language as a lens through which to show a small example of the manner in which nationalism is manifested and persists.

Notes

1 Four phases post independence and one pre-independence phase. There are, however, other earlier phases back to the late 18th century (see, for example, Hutchinson 2001). Our focus is on the century since independence, but we include one pre-independence phase to provide context.
2 Although Smith was still a modernist at that early stage of 1979.

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