

## Some thoughts on the relationships between nationalism, anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism.

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Comments appreciated.)

Background The BDS movement (meaning: Boycott, Divest, Sanction) is an attempt, largely on college/university campuses in First World countries, to exert economic pressure on Israel with the goal of changing some of its policies toward Palestinians, namely those policies that supporters of this movement believe to be wrong (e.g., economically oppressive, unjust, exploitative, etc. of Palestinians). Such boycott movements are classic non-violent strategies that are believed to have proved successful in the past. For example, in the 1920s the Jewish boycott of Ford products is credited with suppressing Henry Ford's public expressions of anti-Semitism; and several decades ago a world-wide boycott of jewelry grade diamonds sold by DeBeers is believed to have pressured The DeBeers Group into changing its mining policies, thought at the time to have been exploitative and unnecessarily dangerous for its African employees working deep in its diamond mines. In response to the BDS movement, Israel and many supporters of Israel around the world have argued that any attempt to undermine Israel's economy is an attack on the state of Israel and is, thus, anti-Zionist. Linking anti-Zionism to anti-Semitism strengthens Israel's argument, for anti-Semitism is almost universally condemned. Thus, the formula "BDS support is anti-Zionist, and anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism" amounts to a powerful response to the BDS movement. My interest in what follows is to examine the second part of this formula "anti-Zionism is a form of anti-Semitism" and its connection to nationalism.

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The claim "Anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism" is not intended to be taken as a statement of identity; it is more naturally understood to be a statement of class inclusion: "Anti-Zionists are anti-Semites" (equivalently: "If you are an anti-Zionist, then you are an anti-Semite."), or perhaps a statement of instantiation: "Anti-Zionism is an instance of anti-Semitism."<sup>1</sup> Whether understood as a claim of identity, of class inclusion, or of instantiation, it follows that if someone is *not*

an anti-Semite they *cannot* be anti-Zionist. But this is false; there are a significant number of philo-Semites who nevertheless are thoughtful anti-Zionists. They are anti-Zionist not because they are anti-Semites but because they are anti-nationalists and Zionism, by its own mission statement, is Jewish nationalism.<sup>2</sup> If Zionism is an instance of nationalism, then anti-nationalism implies anti-Zionism. I want to present and examine the case for anti-nationalism, and by implication for anti-Zionism, which however is *not* a case of anti-Semitism. But first, what is modern nationalism and what justifies someone being an anti-nationalist?<sup>3</sup>

Since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, nationalism has provided the rationale and the motivation in forming nation-states. Modern European nation-states, for example, were founded on nationalist ideals. After a quiet period of about a half century, nationalism currently (2019) seems to be enjoying resurgence around the world. For example, the BJP Party in India promotes (a religious form of) Hindu nationalism for India and recently won elections, the Brexit movement in England has a strong nationalistic core, the current Hungarian government of Viktor Orbán promotes Hungarian nationalism, the Northern League party in Italy promotes Italian nationalism, and in the United States (of all places!) the current President publically announced to much applause that he is a nationalist. There are many more examples of the recent resurgence of nationalism. Nationalism is commonly associated with right-wing political ideology and in parallel with the recent surge of nationalism anti-nationalist movements have likewise experienced recent growth. For example, part of the justification in forming the European Union was to place constraints on nationalism and not have repeated the damage it is believed to have (at least partly) caused in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Joining the EU is conditional on accepting such constraints. Within political theory modern nationalism, from its beginnings in Romanticism in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, has been subject to a body of criticism. And, as to be expected, in reaction to the current renewal of nationalist ideology the arguments against nationalism have been reasserted and sharpened.<sup>4</sup> There are three fundamental problems with nationalism, according to anti-nationalists' arguments: first, it is based on a false view of human nature; second, it inevitably leads to inequality, exclusionism and so-called second-class citizenship; third, nationalism encourages certain patterns of irrationality. I briefly review the main ideas that form the core of modern nationalist ideology before examining each problem.<sup>5</sup>

According to nationalism each person is *born* with a "nationality," inherited from their biological parents and in turn passed on to the person's offspring. One's nationality is not a matter of choice or of learning; rather at birth it "confers" on a person a *national identity*. Your nationality is independent of the circumstances of birth and upbringing. So, for example, if your biological parents were, say, Polish, then you are of Polish nationality even if you have never been to Poland, don't speak a word of the Polish language, don't eat the foods common to Poland, don't practice Polish customs, traditions, holidays, don't even have a "Polish" family name and perhaps even dislike things Polish; your

Polish nationality is independent of such circumstances. If asked, “What are you?” you’ll answer, “Polish,” or you should so answer according to nationalism; it is central to your identity. And if your biological mother is, say, Polish but your biological father is a mixture of nationalities, say half Egyptian nationality on his biological father’s side and half Japanese nationality on his biological mother’s side, then to the question, “What are you?” your answer will (or should) be, “I’m half Polish on my mother’s side and I have Egyptian and Japanese nationalities on my father’s side.” The same thing, according to nationalism, if your parents are, for example, “Chinese,” or “Navajo,” or “Hispanic,” or “German”; like it or not, the circumstances of your upbringing can’t change the nationality you receive from your biological parents. The important point, the bedrock of modern nationalism, is that one’s national identity is *not* a voluntary or a cultural property (not a matter of “nurture”) but a matter of “nature.” Thus, according to nationalist ideology a person’s nationality is independent of whatever citizenship the person holds; for example, someone might be, say, of Japanese or of Polish nationality even though they are not a citizen of Japan or of Poland.

From this core of each human possessing a non-political, non-voluntary national identity, the next step in nationalist thinking is to see individual humans as aggregated into “nations.” All humans sharing the same nationality form a *natural group* referred to as “a people,” “a folk,” or “a nation.” “A nation” in this meaning is not a racial category, nor is it a political/social/cultural/linguistic institution; rather it is (according to nationalism) a natural human grouping. So, for example, we have the “Irish nation,” or perhaps the “Celtic people,” whose members might live all over the earth, hold a variety of citizenships, speak a variety of languages, and have been enculturated into a variety of cultures, but who form, nevertheless, the group of all those who share an Irish (or Celtic) nationality. Or we have the “Magyar (Hungarian) people” consisting of all those whose national identity is Hungarian; or the “Greek people”; or, for a final example, there is according to nationalism the “German folk” comprised of all the people of German nationality. Thus, the bulk of humanity is *naturally* divided into peoples; to highlight this it is sometimes said, within nationalist ideology, that “God made the nations of the earth but humans made the governments.”

Once we have the natural division of humanity into nations, the next step in nationalistic thinking is to add a level of “nurture,” a level of culture or ethnicity.<sup>6</sup> The story goes like this: the individuals forming the different nations will have originally developed in relatively close proximity to each other, living and propagating on a shared “soil,” or “homeland,” a section of earth with a certain set of geographical properties (e.g. coastal, or mountainous, or tropical, or tundra, etc.). The land confronts the people occupying it with a range of challenges and it is in the creative solutions to such challenges that each nation forms its unique style of living, its cultural heritage. Each nation will have developed its unique language, its foods, its type of shelter, dress, religion and myths, its art and

music, its significant symbols, its history recording the major events the nation has had to confront (typically wars with other nations) and honoring the nation's "larger-than-life" members who have contributed to the nation's success, and – significantly – its norms and mores, some of which are intended to keep the nation "pure" by exerting cultural signals concerning marriage (i.e. breeding). Thus, a unique cultural/linguistic tradition, a special ethnic heritage, becomes central to each nation's group identity.

The final part of nationalist ideology asserts two specifically political principles: (1) *to each nation, a state*. That is: *each nation has a right to exist and a right to self-determination, and the best way to assure success is to form a political structure, a state (a government), whose primary goal is the nation's continued existence and flourishing*. As a corollary to (1) nationalism further asserts: (2) *each state should contain one and only one nation*. That is: *if the nation is to flourish, in the government's eyes it must be primary and ideally there should be no other nation within the state with which it must compete*. These two principles yield the modern "nation-state." It controls a territory sufficient for the nation's needs, typically though not necessarily the same territory linked with the nation's history and culture, and referred to as the peoples' "motherland" or "fatherland" or "homeland" in nationalist ideology. The nation-state's government and institutions exist to protect the homeland, to assure the nation's self-determination, and to allow it to prosper. This includes such policies as: conferring a special political status (typically citizenship) on all members of the nation; establishing the nation's language as the official language for all government activities, cultural expressions, education, and national events; forming armed forces for the nation's defense; conferring special status on the nation's religion and religious ceremonies (typically in the form of official holidays and ceremonies); conferring special status on the nation's music (in the form of official hymns and anthems) and symbols (in the form of a national flag, national monuments, and official currency); forming a legal system for promoting culture and for controlling behavior (typically, including sanctions designed to discouraging "outside" marriage); and, importantly, giving official preference in the distribution of resources and opportunities to members of the nation. The modern nation-state will have multiple governmental mechanisms designed to keep the primary nation primary. The central political point of nationalism is: *a nation-state is a nation's state*. The nation creates it and operates it to serve the nation, and the nation believes it "owns" it – it is "their country."<sup>7</sup>

From the account thus far, it is clear that the norm within modern nationalist ideology is that a person's nationality, ethnicity, and citizenship will coincide. So, for example, a person of Chinese nationality will be, ideally, ethnically/culturally Chinese and will be a citizen of China. But while this is the norm, it is not necessarily so according to nationalism: all three might differ. A person of Chinese nationality might be ethnically French (having been brought up and

educated in France) and might be a citizen of, say, Canada (having been born in Canada and having parents who are Canadian citizens). Again, there are today many people who are considered by nationalists to be of Turkish nationality and who have lived all their lives, with some families for several generations, in Germany and are through-and-through ethnically German. It is an important part of nationalist ideology that it keeps separate a person's nationality, their ethnicity, and their citizenship. The nationalist norm, however, is that for each person these three *should* match up.

These four levels (nationality, nation, ethnicity, nation-state), in brief, form the core of nationalist ideology and it is the belief in this ideology that has led to the founding of the modern nation-state. The three problems with nationalism mentioned above can now be addressed: 1) nationalism contains a false view of human nature, 2) nationalism leads to inequality, exclusionism, and second-class citizenship, and 3) nationalism promotes patterns of irrationality.

1) With respect to human nature, it turns out that there is no such thing as a "nationality," no such thing as a non-voluntary, non-cultural national identity inherited from parents that links a person to a "nation." Everything naturally (i.e. biologically) inherited from one's parents is genetic, for one's genes are the only physical units in a person's body that come directly from their biological parents. A person's genes link the person biologically to their parents and other family members who are biological relatives, but there is no genetic unit or marker linking a person to a "nation" whose members are not biological relatives. A person might inherit physical traits, or susceptibility to a certain disease, or perhaps certain talents and abilities from their parental germ lines, but the genetic mechanism of inheritance is not capable of passing on anything like a national identity. There is no "Polish," no "Chinese," no "Hungarian," no "Ethiopian," .... gene; nor is there a cluster of genes on any human chromosome that confers a nationality on a person or makes a person a member of a nation. Human DNA can't encode the non-biological connections that are claimed by nationalists to form a "nation." In addition, there has never been found an inheritable, biological base for any group of humans who identify themselves as a "people" like there is for a group that forms a (biological) family. Thus, the core foundation of nationalism, namely that each human has an inherited, innate "nationality," is false. This means that there is no such reality corresponding to nationalism's concept of a *natural* division of humans into "peoples," or "nations," or "folks."

But even if there were an inherited component conferring a nationality on a person at birth, the history of humankind is one of mass migration; humans have, from their earliest time, wandered all over the earth and everywhere interbred. This would mean that by now everyone would be such a vast mixture of so-called nationalities that it would no longer be possible to say what national

identity a given person has. In just the relatively short period of recorded history, we know that most organized groups of humans have migrated into new territories and genetically mixed with each other. For any so-called “nation,” one just has to go back in history a bit further and one discovers that the so-called “nation” is thoroughly mixed with countless other “peoples.” It would be impossible (under the assumption of an inherited nationality) to identify in a non-arbitrary way what so-called nationality anyone possesses; each human is such a vast blend of countless genetic lineages. But this assumption is false, there is no such *inherited* component or property or attribute. I suggest it comes down to this: a person’s so-called “nationality” is the cultural tradition with which a person *voluntarily* identifies and practices. The only conclusion we can come to, one that genetics, biology and anthropology have long held, is that the ideas of “nationality,” “national identity,” and “nation” are just fictions within nationalism’s ideology. But calling them “fictions” does not mean that these ideas are meaningless; they are important parts of the *cultural myths* believed in by states that accept nationalism as their political foundation.<sup>8</sup>

Because the idea of inheriting a national identity (one’s so-called “nationality”) is so central to nationalist ideology, let’s consider some possible objections before moving on to problem area (2). It might be objected that the sciences of biology, genetics and anthropology recognize kinship relations and aren’t these exactly what nationalism means by “nationality,” namely, a kinship-group identity? When we consider all life on planet earth, on a mid-level it is true that all humans are “kin”; all humans are genetically related and thereby we form a species – *Homo sapiens*. On this level all humans form one big “nation” and, to carry out nationalist ideology, we ought to form a single world-wide government that serves all of humanity’s well-being. But this “species-level” of biological relatedness is not what nationalist ideology means by “a nation comprising all and only those with the same nationality.” On the local level, there is the genetic (a biological) relationship of “lineage” that allows us to isolate extended families, very important in the areas of medicine and law. Extended family members are “kin” in the sense that they share a certain percentage of genetic material, from half (close family members), to a quarter, to an eighth, to a sixteenth, ... , down to very distant family members. Obviously, there must be a cut-off point to this descending scale of genetic lineage, on pain of ending up with species-wide kinship. It is noteworthy that in many countries both medicine and law have a relatively close cut-off point in that they sanction marriage (i.e., breeding) between 3<sup>rd</sup> cousins, considering them distant enough family members to be treated as if they were no longer “family-kin.” But again, this is not what nationalism means by “nationality,” for on this level of genetic relatedness, each extended family would be encouraged to form their own nation-state; this is clearly impossible, if only because there isn’t enough territory on earth, never mind that such extended-family nation-states, even if the cut-off point of genetic relatedness is a very small fraction, say 1/128<sup>th</sup>, would not be politically viable units. Larger than extended family units, one might consider such human

communities as clans and tribes; again, these extended kinship units (if that's what clans and tribes are) are not what modern nationalism refers to by "nations." This brings us to the space between extended-family kinship relatedness and species-wide kinship relatedness; it is in this space that nationalism claims humans naturally divide into "nations" by sharing a "nationality" that each individual inherits from their biological parents, making them related in a *weaker* way than family-kin yet in a *stronger* way than species-kin. And it is in this space that anti-nationalists argue such a division isn't based in *nature* (i.e., not founded on genetic lineage or gene pools if only because of the history of massive hominid interbreeding we know about, not to mention all the pre-history interbreeding we don't know about), it is instead a conventional, that is an arbitrary, grouping that is at bottom cultural and thus *voluntary*.

Another objection might be: what about companies, for example *Ancestry.com* or *23 and Me*, that claim to trace a person's nationality by genetic analysis; don't they prove that each person inherits at birth a certain mix of national identities? No, these companies don't prove that nationalities exist, and don't – indeed can't – discover a person's (primary) national identity in their genetic material. By analyzing a sample of a person's genetic material, they are able to discover who the members the person's extended biological family are to a relatively large degree out (e.g. 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> cousins, great-to the fifth degree-grandparents, etc.). A person using the services of these companies might be found to share more genetic traits and markers with, say, extended family members who live or have lived in western Africa than other extended family members living or having lived in, say, northern Europe. The person is, thus, genetically more related to certain inhabitants of western Africa than to certain inhabitants of northern Europe. This much is scientifically based on genetic relationships (kinships) between and among extended family members. The error enters when, in presenting their findings, nationalistic categories are substituted for these biological/genetic categories. So, instead of stating that this person has a certain percentage of genetic similarity to some people who lived in western Africa (making them members of the same extended family), it is claimed that the person has that percentage of, say, Ghanaian "nationality" because the people living in that area of western Africa have formed a modern nation-state: Ghana. This last step is cultural-political, not genetic; there is no link to a "Ghanaian nation," there is no "Ghanaian identity" that has been discovered in the person's DNA, there is only a link to individuals who are biological relatives and who, as it happens, lived in the modern nation-state of Ghana. And instead of stating that this person has a lesser percentage of genetic similarity with certain individuals who currently live or have lived in northern Europe (making them more distant members of the same extended family), it is claimed that the person has that lesser percentage of, say, Swedish "nationality" because people in that area of northern Europe have formed a modern nation-state: Sweden. Had those same distant extended family members moved generations ago from the territory now known as the nation-state of Sweden to the modern nation-

state of, say, Germany, would the ancestry service return a finding that the person has that lesser percentage of German “nationality”? Clearly, there is nothing in the genetic material linking someone to a “nation.” Genetic analysis companies can trace only a person’s distant biological relatives; they are not able to discover a person’s “national identity” unless they make an unjustified step from biology to nationalistic ideology and substitute cultural/ethnic ideas for naturalistic/genetic data.<sup>9</sup>

2) The second problem with nationalism is that, when put into practice, it *inevitably* brings about either exclusionism or inequality, two forms of injustice. The practice of nationalism by a nation-state *requires* the government to prefer the welfare of the nation that founded the nation-state over any other perceived nationality. Indeed, that’s why the nation-state exists: to assure *the nation’s* wellbeing. This preference is sometimes encoded in law. Where the nation’s territory is small or relatively poor and its resources are scarce, this means excluding anyone of a “foreign” nationality from permanent status, from citizenship, or from owning property. We have horrid examples of ethnic cleansing and genocide when the government believes its primary nation’s welfare is being threatened by a “foreign” minority nation within its territory. The idea that “Japan is for the Japanese,” or “Italy is for the Italians,” or “England is for Anglo-Saxons,” (to offer some common examples of slogans one hears) means that the nation-state ideally should contain all and only those members of the nation for which the nation-state exists. Of course, visitors are welcome and some end up staying, and in some cases borders change over the course of time; thus, most modern nation-states will contain a minority population of foreign inhabitants who are sometime even allowed citizenship. But when push-comes-to-shove, xenophobia and exclusionism is bound to be practiced as the best way for a government to fulfill its “duty” to its people; foreign minority populations will be “encouraged” to leave or forced out, and borders will be closed to those perceived as foreign nationalities. We are witness today to the nation-state of Myanmar in which the primary Burmese “nationals” are forcing out a minority “people,” the Rohingya; this is nationalist ideology at work.

Where the territory is large or relatively abundant and resources sufficient to sustain multiple nationalities, the practice of nationalism will *inevitably* lead to inequality. There will be the primary/dominant nation for which the nation-state exists and whose wellbeing is uppermost in government policies, and there will be the other minority nationalities (who might have their own nation-state somewhere but who have decided for various reasons not to live there). The distribution of goods, services and opportunities will naturally be biased toward members of the dominant nation over members of minority nations. For example, government positions will be open to members of the primary nation over those perceived to be of other nationalities, the more so the more powerful and influential the position; so too with educational, economic, and cultural



opportunities. Even if members of minority nationalities enjoy full citizenship, the practice of nationalism inevitably makes them “second-class” citizens, or makes them feel marginalized, and they will feel as if they are “lesser” members of the nation-state to the degree that official preference is given to the primary nation. Cases of secessionist movements, for example that of the Basques in Spain, attest to this sense of feeling kept in a second-class status. And, of course, cultural norms (if not legal sanctions) of both the primary and the minority nationalities will discourage mixed-nationality families in the attempt to keep the nations “pure” as well as to keep the primary nation primary. We might go so far as to say that to the degree that there is full equality among all members of a nation-state containing multiple nationalities, every citizen treated alike no matter their perceived nationality/ethnicity, to that degree nationalism has been given up as the political/cultural/ideological foundation of that nation-state.

3) Many defenders of nationalism credit it with supplying a deeply important human need: a feeling of community. Being an accepted member of a community that speaks your language, are broadly like-minded in their value system, practice the holidays and ceremonies that you practice, are co-religionists, look forward to and enjoy the same civic events that you do, and provides a sense of “belonging,” these are thought central to a person’s emotional wellbeing and necessary for a person’s social development. Believing in one’s inherited nationality and on this basis developing a national identity (i.e. being brought up speaking the nation’s language as one’s mother tongue and being enculturated in the ways of the nation) supplies, it is argued by nationalists, the connection to a community and with it the emotional wellbeing and social development each person needs. Critics of nationalism, however, find worrisome problems with such emotional attachments and social identification. There are problems nationalism poses for good thinking; they go by such names as: group-think, common knowledge, conventional wisdom, habitual thinking, peer pressure, and the fallacy *ad populum*. The worry that anti-nationalists have here is that to the degree that a person identifies with a community, it becomes to that degree more difficult for the person to be an unbiased independent critical thinker with respect to that community. And if the education system is controlled by the dominant “nation,” it will exert a powerful influence to have its members broadly think alike and (especially) to think well of the nation with which its students identify. There are subtle and not so subtle pressures a nation exerts on its members that none should allow their thinking to stray too far from the accepted codes and cultural norms that help define the nation. It becomes all-too-easy, anti-nationalists argue, for individuals to align their thoughts with the thinking of the community with which they have bonded and whose continued acceptance they value. It is very difficult for a biased thinker to discover and recognize their own biases once the weight of cultural habit sets in,

for by then cultural biases rarely appear as biases. Thus, people will naturally and normally attempt to justify their thinking with such claims as: “that’s what everybody believes,” or “this is common knowledge,” or “that’s what I was brought up to believe,” or “leading people in my community believe the same things,” or even “my community expects me to think this way.” These, of course, are all cases of bad thinking (even if, I might add, the thoughts in question happen to be true). In the area of thinking, then, the tight community that the practice of nationalism encourages can lead to and in some cases even requires various forms of intellectual irrationality. It is to be noted that standards of rationality and good thinking are not based in any nationality, culture or people; these standards are themselves anti-nationalistic in their universality.

Problems with the feeling of community that nationalism encourages become more worrisome and dangerous in the area of behavior. Emotional identification with a “people” can be, and historically has been, so strong that members are willing to give up their lives for the “honor” of the nation as well as for the defense of the nation. Such identification is something the nation encourages, for there will be times when the nation will call upon its members to fight for “the motherland’s” or “the fatherland’s” honor and defense. Modern nation-states have considered it a civic virtue to have its members believe, “My country above all,” “My country right or wrong” and “My nation’s destiny is greater than my individual life.” Such national loyalty and patriotism, while perhaps serving the interests of the nation-state, are widely thought to be irrational when they slip (as they all-too-easily do) into chauvinism and blind devotion to country; the reason is that the interests of nations can be, and historically have been, unjust (i.e. morally wrong) as well as illegal (by international standards). The interests and demands of the nation should always be subject to independent critical evaluation before one gives support to them – all-the-more-so before one is ready to give up their life – but unfortunately this rarely happens and independent critical evaluation is discouraged by the nation whose interests are to be served. Thus, if their emotional connection to the nation is strong enough, people who closely identify with their community (with “my people,” “my folk”) will fear their compatriots’ judgment to the point that they “go along,” give in to peer pressure, and override or rationalize away their qualms; they can easily become caught up in acts of group violence, especially against those the nation has marked as “other” and targeted for xenophobia. We have only to recall the mass irrational behavior associated with nationalistic ideology that erupted in Spain under Franco, in Italy under Mussolini, and in Germany under Hitler in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, and earlier in the Century in Turkey with respect to its Armenian minority.

It is important to recognize that the three problems with nationalist ideology covered above are independent. For example, if someone accepts the critique that the notion of a non-voluntary “nationality” inherited/conferred at birth is

indeed a false view of human nature, he or she might still be a “cultural/ethnic nationalist” holding that one’s “nationality” is at bottom a *voluntary/learned* identification with a certain cultural tradition or ethnicity. But even if someone thinks a person’s national identity is completely a matter of “nurture,” they could nevertheless still accept the modern nation-state as a well-founded political institution, justified in giving preference to the dominant “cultural nation” or “ethnicity” whose well-being it has a “sacred duty” to promote. Thus, the second and third critiques (that nationalism leads to unjust inequality, exclusionism, second-class citizenship, and that it leads to patterns of irrationality) would still apply and provide a strong enough justification for anti-nationalism. Likewise, it is important to see that the second and third critiques anti-nationalists make of nationalism work in the space of high probabilities. It is not with logical necessity that nationalism results in the inequality and marginalization of perceived minority “nationals” or in patterns of irrationality, it is rather a matter of the “inner logic” of nationalist ideology. So, given certain historical conditions (scarce resources or political turmoil, for example), nationalist beliefs “inevitably drive” their expression in the ways that anti-nationalists have criticized. History bears out this “ethnic dynamic”; since the founding of modern nation-states in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century, has there been even one that has not at some time and to some degree experienced the unequal treatment by the primary “nation” of minority nationals or experienced the described patterns of irrationality?

There are notable exceptions where a modern state has been founded specifically *not* as a nation-state, notable because such states are few. One is the United States, founded on the Enlightenment ideal of rational acceptance of a set of “universal human principles.” So, at least in theory if not always in practice (e.g. the shame of slavery and on-going racial discrimination), a person’s country of origin (i.e. nationality), religion, language, ethnicity, race, culture, etc. were not to matter in establishing what is now the United States, and are not to matter in its continued operation; rather upholding the values, ideals and principles expressed in the Constitution of the United States (none of which are nationalistic) are what were and what are to count. For example: equality before the law, the sovereignty of the individual as a counter to the “tyranny of the majority” and to community needs and demands, individual freedoms of expression (to the point of destroying the official US flag) as a counter to social/cultural pressures, temporary holding of positions of government power and access to power open to all citizens equally, equal voting weight to each citizen, open citizenship opportunity, no preference given in the distribution of goods and services to any nationality/ethnicity, and (which, unfortunately, many don’t understand) the anti-populist Electoral College, these and others are Constitutionally protected principles and ideals (if not always the reality) that can naturally be understood as anti-nationalistic. In contrast to nationalistic ideology in which one’s nationality and one’s citizenship are independent, in modern states that are not nation-states one’s citizenship determines one’s

political identity. So, for example, holding US citizenship means that a person is fully an “American” (even though the person might, on a personal level, voluntarily identify with, say, a Hispanic, Irish, or Apache culture/community within the United States). Of course, among the population of the United States there are and always have been those who are nationalists, and the history of the US contains nationalistic based violence (for example, the semi-official treatment of the indigenous Native people), but – and this is the point – nationalism is not the *official* foundational ideology of the US as it is for modern nation-states. Another example of a non-nationalistic modern state is Canada. It too has had its outbursts of nationalistic violence (e.g. the Quebec separatist movement), but the official founding of Canada is not based on any nationalistic ideology, even though it is part of the British Commonwealth. Here then are two cases of modern states that are not nation-states, offered as a counter to those who might argue that there is no realistic alternative to the modern nation-state.

At this point, I will take it that anti-nationalism has been shown to be a well-justified political position and that traditional nationalism is an ideology with deep and serious problems. Among academics nationalism is clearly on the defensive, and it is noteworthy that some recent nationalist movements have resorted to extremes of violence in an effort to “purify” the “homeland” – as an example we might recall the violent Serb effort of the 1990s for a “greater Serbia” which have seen its leaders tried in the International Criminal Court for war crimes connected to attempts at ethnic cleansing.

But now what about Zionism? As conceived by Herzl and as continued to be thought of since Herzl’s time, Zionism is an instance of nationalism: namely, that the Jewish people (i.e. nation) should have their own nation-state within which they would be the majority and be primary, could practice self-determination and could flourish religiously and culturally without the threat of anti-Semitism.<sup>10</sup> While anti-Zionism might be a new form of anti-Semitism, and for some it surely is, this is not necessarily so. It was stated above that one cannot be both a Zionist and an anti-nationalist (for Zionism is an instance or a sub-class of nationalism). One result of justifying anti-nationalism is that *anti-Zionism cannot automatically be classified as anti-Semitism, for it might be a case of anti-nationalism*. That is, for any case of anti-Zionism, it is an *independent* question whether or not anti-Semitism is involved; it is conceptually required – and indeed morally required since the accusation of anti-Semitism is a moral charge – to demonstrate *on separate grounds* that an anti-Zionist is (also) an anti-Semite, it cannot just be assumed that anyone who is one is (or even probably is) thereby the other as the class-inclusion claim “anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism” would imply. So, for example, if someone supports the BDS movement because he or she is anti-Zionist, one has no grounds to assume the person is an anti-Semite without

*independent* evidence of anti-Semitism, since the person might be an anti-Zionist for anti-nationalist reasons and believe (even if wrongly) the most effective way to counter nationalism in the nation-state case of Israel is to support the BDS movement. If we let A = BDS supporter, B = anti-Zionist, and C = anti-Semite, then - I am arguing - the class *intersection* representation on the left (Figure 1) is correct, it models the reality, but the class *inclusion* representation on the right (Figure 2), even though simpler to grasp, is not correct, it does not do justice to the reality.

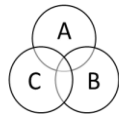


Figure 1



Figure 2

It is not just a handful of academics (e.g. linguist Noam Chomsky, philosopher Michael Marder) who identify themselves as anti-Zionists (because they are anti-nationalists) while insisting that they are not anti-Semitic, according to the Wikipedia entry for *Zionism*,

“Many Haredi Orthodox organizations oppose Zionism; they view Zionism as a secular movement. They reject nationalism as a doctrine and consider Judaism to be first and foremost a religion that is not dependent on a state.”<sup>11</sup> Also, “The rabbinical leaders of the so-called [Litvishe](#) world in current and past generations, such as Rabbi [Elazar Menachem Shach](#) and Rabbi [Avigdor Miller](#), are strongly opposed to all forms of Zionism, religious and secular.”<sup>12</sup> And, “Many other [Hasidic](#) groups in Jerusalem, most famously the [Satmar](#) Hasidim, as well as the larger movement they are part of, the [Edah HaChareidis](#), are strongly anti-Zionist. One of the best known Hasidic opponents of all forms of modern political Zionism was [Hungarian rebbe](#) and [Talmudic](#) scholar [Joel Teitelbaum](#). In his view, the current State of Israel is contrariwise to Judaism, because it was [founded](#) by people who included some anti-religious personalities, and were in apparent violation of the traditional notion that Jews should wait for the Jewish Messiah.”<sup>13</sup>

The point here is not to question the correctness of the reasons why such Jewish groups identify themselves as anti-Zionists; they are offered as clear cases of deeply religious Jews (thus, in no way are they anti-Semites) who are nevertheless anti-Zionists because they find a conflict between, on the one hand, the principles of Judaism they hold dear and live by, and, on the other hand, the (modern, non-Biblical/secular) nationalist values they believe to be embedded in Zionism. Aside from religious based anti-Zionism/anti-nationalism, there is the “post-Zionism” secular movement both within and out of Israel. “During the last quarter of the 20th century, classic nationalism in Israel declined. This led to the rise of [post-Zionism](#). Post-Zionism asserts that Israel should abandon the concept

of a "state of the Jewish people" and strive to be a state of all its citizens...."<sup>14</sup>  
The post-Zionism movement seems to be an additional (non-religious) example of anti-Zionism because of anti-nationalist reasons (i.e. it is a pro multi-cultural and pro internationalist movement) that does not qualify as anti-Semitism. I am not attempting to argue that anti-Zionists are correct in their beliefs, I am making a logical, a conceptual (that is, an objective) point: namely, as long as there is at least one anti-Zionist who is *not* an anti-Semite (and there clearly is), there is a counterexample to the claim that "anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism" and thus (if this is understood as a class inclusion claim) this claim is *demonstrably false*.<sup>15</sup>

It might be asked at this point: what about probability? Doesn't anti-Zionism at least provide evidence for anti-Semitism? Doesn't being an anti-Zionist make it very likely that the anti-Zionist is also an anti-Semite? I would argue that it does not. It is clear that anti-nationalism, on its own, provides no evidence for or against anti-Semitism, and anti-nationalism implies anti-Zionism. Anti-Zionism, on its own, likewise provides no evidence for or against anti-Semitism, for anti-Zionism might just as well be equal evidence for anti-nationalism. It would seem, then, that anti-Zionism (on its own) does not increase the probability that the anti-Zionist is also an anti-Semite. It might be asked: how do things stand historically? Now, it might turn out historically to be a purely empirical matter that an anti-Zionist is (often) also an anti-Semite; if this is the case factually then it is required to explain why, given that anti-Zionism, as just argued, can't *on its own* be evidence sufficient for anti-Semitism. We must address the question: what when added to anti-Zionism increases the probability that the anti-Zionist is also an anti-Semite?

When might it be true that anti-Zionism is an instance of anti-Semitism? What general circumstance might provide evidence needed to link anti-Zionism to anti-Semitism? If my arguments above relating anti-nationalism to anti-Zionism are correct, then I suggest that showing a case of anti-Zionism is *not* a case of anti-nationalism would provide minimal evidence to indicate the probability of anti-Semitism. A stronger indication would be a case showing that a person is an anti-Zionist *and* an outright nationalist. A nationalist who is an anti-Zionist would have to explain: why is the nation-state of Israel singled out for non-existence if not because of anti-Semitism? Such a person could not refer to specific Israeli policies with which they disagree (as BDS supporters can) for anti-Zionism is not about specific policies; it applies to the ideological foundation of the nation-state of Israel; that is, it applies to Zionism, to Jewish nationalism. Thus, I propose this formula: modern nationalist ideology, when added to anti-Zionism, increases the probability (and is evidence that) the person is an anti-Semite.

One way to expand this formula would be as follows. Suppose we make a three-way division in the history of Zionism: (1) Zionism up to Herzl (roughly the end of

the 19<sup>th</sup> Century) was primarily a religious/cultural movement. This period of Zionism did not seek to establish a nation-state and so can't be considered an instance of modern nationalism; thus, because this period is not a nationalist movement, it is not subject to anti-nationalist criticism and can be excluded from consideration. (2) Zionism from Herzl to WWII was motivated by nationalist ideology; it was a movement to establish a Jewish nation-state as a haven from anti-Semitism. (3) Zionism post WWII was on even stronger nationalist grounds than just escape from anti-Semitism, for the ugly history of attempted genocide (the Holocaust) must be added in. While anti-Semitism is a worse enough evil, genocide is universality thought to be among the most evil of all evils: a crime against humanity.<sup>16</sup> It might be argued, then, that the period (2) of Zionism as motivated by reaction to anti-Semitism was (is) a nationalist movement and is thus subject to anti-nationalist criticism. That is, it would be possible for someone to be anti-nationalist, and thus anti-Zionist, but not an anti-Semite - someone could well argue against establishing the (nation-state) of Israel on the ideological foundation of modern nationalism on general grounds of anti-nationalist beliefs. But it becomes clear in this period of Zionism that someone who is a modern nationalist, being an anti-Zionist conceptually stands out; someone who believed the modern nationalist ideology and nevertheless argued *against* establishing the nation-state of Israel would be open to the accusation of anti-Semitism unless the person could offer a justification sufficient to show they were not an anti-Semite. The burden would be on such a person to show that they were *not* an anti-Semite, given the evidence that they were both a nationalist and an anti-Zionist.

The period (3) of Zionism, it could be argued, is something else again: there is the terrible recent history of attempted genocide of the Jewish people (the WWII Holocaust) and there is the actual founding and the factual existence of the nation-state of Israel (in 1948). Given these two realities: (1) that nationalist ideals have already led to the establishment of a modern nation-state, and (2) that this nation-state assures the fundamental future self-preservation of the surviving post-Holocaust Jewish people, a believer in nationalism who is also an anti-Zionist has an added burden – perhaps insurmountable – showing that they were not an anti-Semite. Anti-Zionism combined with nationalism in this case amounts to strong evidence of anti-Semitism, for historically there were no alternatives to assuring Jewish survival than founding the nation-state of Israel as protection against future attempts of genocide.

To summarize, then, I believe that I have shown that *some anti-Zionists are likely anti-Semites*. Which ones? Those who are nationalists. Such ideologues fall within the intersection of B and C in the class-intersection representation of Figure 1 on the left above. But it is only within this B-C intersection in which the claim that “anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism” is true.<sup>17</sup>

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## Notes:

1. It is probably the case that those who, as government officials or as ordinary citizens in non-official capacity, claim “anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism” don’t mean this as a categorical statement. If pressed, what they probably would agree they mean is something such as: anti-Zionism is *non-conclusive evidence* of anti-Semitism, or: it is *highly likely* that an anti-Zionist is also an anti-Semite, or: the *vast majority* of anti-Zionists are also anti-Semites, or: anti-Zionist activity *typically* expresses anti-Semitic beliefs. However, the claim “anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism” is publically made in its categorical form and it is as such that I wish to examine it and its connection to nationalism. As will become clear, without additional conditions accompanying anti-Zionism, it is doubtful that it alone increases the probability of anti-Semitism.
2. See the “Statement of Principles of Zionism” listed on the website for The American Zionist Movement under the menu caption “About.” While the term “nationalism” is not used, the first of the Principles, as well as others, is a clear nationalist inspired mission statement. The Wikipedia entry for “Zionism,” a well-documented article, makes it explicit that Zionism is a nationalist movement on behalf of the Jewish people.
3. It might be argued that versions of nationalism go all the way back to the Bible and to the Greek city-state (polis), and perhaps even further, for this is where the idea of grouping populations as “nations” first gained political significance. It is also to be noted that nationalism comes in a variety of “flavors”: for example, white nationalism is a version of racial nationalism, Hindu and Christian nationalism are versions of religious nationalism, First People and Native American nationalism seem to be largely versions of cultural nationalism, and the recent push for Catalanian nationalism seems in part a version of linguistic nationalism and in part a version of economic nationalism. However, my focus in this essay is somewhat narrow; I will be examining the nationalist ideology that underpins the modern nation-state. This version of nationalism gelled into a coherent ideology in, roughly, mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century Europe and gained political importance as that Century progressed. By “nationalism,” then, I will mean in this essay the version of (modern) nationalism that is offered as the ideological justification of the modern nation-state.
4. Today, anti-nationalism often goes by the label “globalism” in the world of trade and economics, “multiculturalism” in the world of culture, and “internationalism” or “cosmopolitanism” in the political sphere. Nationalists tend to be anti-globalists, anti-multiculturalists, and anti-internationalists, and historically nationalists have associated globalism, multiculturalism, and internationalism with the “Jewish world view.”
5. I rely here in part on the entry “Nationalism” in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (see especially sections 1.1, 1.2, and 3.1, accessed May 2019), and in part on material from my Political Philosophy course, taught at Rivier University every 4 years in the Fall of the US Presidential elections from the mid-1990s to 2012 (texts: *Political Philosophy*, G. MacCallum, Prentiss Hall 1987, especially Chapter 4, and *Political Philosophy*, J. Hampton, Westview Press 1997).
6. The term “ethnicity” is somewhat unclear in its use. Some use it to refer to a person’s innate nationality, and of these some see no problem toggling back and forth between “ethnicity” and “nationality” while others appear to prefer “ethnicity” perhaps to avoid some of the problems associated with nationalist movements. Others use “ethnicity” to refer to something quite different: a person’s cultural upbringing, the culture and “native tongue” with which the person



identifies. I will be using “ethnicity” in this second sense, namely to refer to a person’s learned, and therefore at bottom *voluntary*, cultural tradition in which the person has been enculturated, with which the person identifies, practices, and might *believe* is an innate nationality.

7. This, of course, is a utilitarian (a consequentialist) position the “nation” takes with respect to its nation-state. The state exists and functions for the benefit of the “people” – the “nation” – that created and operates it. Aside from the many and deep problems associated with consequentialism (which are not my topic here), it should be the case that if there are more harmful consequences than benefits the nation-state delivers to the nation, the nation ought to be ready to try an alternative to the nation-state. But historically this never happens; loyalty and patriotism assure that, no matter what, the benefits from their nation-state always outweigh the harms in the eyes of the folk.

8. Plato in *The Republic* (Bk. III, 414b – 415d) speaks of the “Noble Lie,” a politically necessary untruth. It is a myth that the city-state (polis) gets its member to believe in order to shift some of their familial love and loyalty to their political system. It strengthens their sense of community and makes it easier than it would be without belief in the noble lie to muster members to defend the polis should military force be needed. The “Noble Lie” is that the polis is your mother/father, fellow citizens are your brothers and sisters, and the whole polis is an extended family. As a person would love and have loyalty for family members, so too a citizen should love and have loyalty for the polis, their greater family; as a person would fight to the death to protect their immediate family, the members of the polis must be willing to fight to the death for their larger family.

9. There is another possible objection that would not be worth mentioning were it not for the fact that it is widely believed by nationalists. It is that there must be “nationalities” because you can typically tell what nationality a person has by looking at them. Such nationalists believe that there is a characteristic (non-cultural) “look” the members of each nation has; for examples, Italians typically look a certain way (perhaps “Mediterranean” features of dark hair and tan skin tone), Irish likewise possess certain characteristic visible features (perhaps “Nordic” fair skin and reddish hair), so too with Russians, Germans, Ethiopians, Laplanders, and all the nations of the earth. Clearly, this is nothing but the worst kind of stereotyping (the fallacy of hasty generalization). Trying to guess a person’s “nationality” from visual physical features is just that: guessing. However, there are certain visual features that let us, within a range of accuracy from poor to only fairly reliable, tell a person’s “race”: Asian, Caucasian, Polynesian perhaps, African, etc. but this has little to do with the version of nationalist ideology underpinning the modern nation-state.

10. I take the Wikipedia entry for “Zionism” to be a thorough, scholarly article, recently reviewed and updated. It appears to be factually trustworthy in both the history of the Zionist movement, and in presenting Zionism’s ideology.

11. 12. 13. Wikipedia entry “Zionism,” section 7.4 and 7.5 (accessed May 2019).

14. “Zionism” entry in Wikipedia, section 5.6 (accessed May 2019).

15. While this might seem a somewhat pedantic exercise given the emotions, the ugly history, the tragic events, and the existential importance associated with these positions (especially anti-Semitism), it is perhaps all-the-more necessary to try to achieve as much conceptual clarity as one can precisely because of these emotional, ugly, tragic, and life-important associations. Note also that my remarks throughout do not amount to a moral evaluation of anti-Zionism or anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism is a morally reprehensible set of beliefs and actions, and both supporting the BDS movement and being an anti-Zionist should certainly be subject to moral examination and criticism. However, I believe it is important, perhaps even basic, to understand these positions as concepts and to gain some clarity about how they might relate to each other as political *ideologies*, sets of ideas. This is the primary focus of my topic.

16. Within anti-nationalist ideology “a crime against humanity” should be thought of as a crime against all humans with respect to our common, universal dignity. Within the nationalist ideology, genocide will be thought “a crime against humanity” because it shrinks or lessens humanity by subtracting from the totality one of its “nations” or one of its “ethnicities,” by analogy with, say, a species going extinct as a consequence of human activity.

17. The argument, in brief, would run: (1) some anti-Zionists are nationalist and some are anti-nationalist. (2) Belief in anti-nationalism is evidence that an anti-Zionist is not an anti-Semite. (3) Belief in nationalism is evidence that an anti-Zionist is an anti-Semite. Conclusion (4): thus, not all anti-Zionists are anti-Semites. This argument is inductively strong; this essay is an extended argument that its statements are true. Of course, the argument that only some anti-Zionists are anti-Semites, namely those who are nationalists, does not address anyone who is a Zionist. A Zionist, to be consistent, would have to be a nationalist; such a believer, however, might or might not be an anti-Semite.