The Limits of Nationalism

This book discusses the justifications and limits of cultural nationalism from a liberal perspective. It begins by presenting a normative typology of nationalist ideologies. The main distinction in this typology is between cultural nationalisms and statist nationalisms. According to statist nationalisms, states have an interest in the cultural homogeneity of their citizenries. According to cultural nationalisms, people have interests in adhering to their cultures (the adherence thesis) and in sustaining these cultures for generations (the historical thesis). Gans argues that freedom- and identity-based justifications for cultural nationalism common in the literature can only support the adherence thesis, while the historical thesis could only be justified by the interest people have in the long-term endurance of their personal and group endeavours.

The Limits of Nationalism examines demands often made in the name of cultural nationalism. Gans argues that national self-determination should be constitutionally interpreted in sub-statist rather than statist forms. The book presents two conceptions of the notion of historical rights. It also discusses the demands entailed by cultural particularism as opposed to cultural cosmopolitanism.

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The Limits of Nationalism

Chaim Gans

Tel Aviv University
For my father
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Acknowledgements

In the course of writing this book I received aid and support from many people and institutions. My greatest debt is to my friends Meir Dan-Cohen and Andrei Marmor who read earlier drafts of most of this book. Daniel Kofman, Alon Harel, David Heyd, Ariel Porat, David Enoch, Will Kymlicka, Sammy Smooha, Zvi Gitelman, Rainer Bauböck, Thomas Pogge and Yael Tamir commented on various sections of this book.

I began the research for this project at the Max Planck Institute for Public International Law and the Law of Nations in Heidelberg in 1995, and completed most of it at the Yitzhak Rabin Center for Israel Studies in Tel Aviv in 2001. Both institutions provided me with financial support and with a supportive and congenial environment. I would like to express my appreciation to the staff of these institutions, especially Jochen A. Frowein and Rüdiger Wolfrum, directors of the Max Planck Institute and Naomi Vered, director of the research programme at the Rabin Center.

Most of the work on this book was done while fulfilling, and sometimes neglecting, my regular duties at the Faculty of Law at Tel Aviv University. I am grateful to my colleagues for their patience. I would also like to thank the Minerva Center for Human Rights and the Zegla Center at the Tel Aviv University Faculty of Law for their financial support.

Several people provided me with valuable research assistance. First, I would like to note Amos Kfir, an outstanding and beloved student, whose recent tragic death left everyone who knew him grieving. A group of equally dedicated and able students subsequently provided me with invaluable help: Einat Fisher, Tally Kritzman, Keren Brown and Michal Saliternik. Michal Kirschner edited my English and contributed not only to improving the style, but in the process also helped me to clarify my thinking.

I presented earlier drafts of chapters of this book at several colloquia and workshops where I received helpful comments. I am especially indebted to the following: the participants of the Netherlands–Israel Academy Colloquium on nationalism and multiculturalism which was
organised by Govert A. den Hartogh and took place in Amsterdam in November 1997; the participants of the colloquium on historical justice which was organized by Lukas H. Meyer and was held at the Einstein Forum in Potsdam, in July 2001; the participants of David Miller’s political philosophy workshop at Nuffield College where I presented earlier drafts of Chapters 2 and 4 in October 1998 and in May 2000.


Earlier versions of some of the arguments presented in Chapter 5 appeared in the article ‘Nationalism and Immigration’, published by Kluwer Academic Publishers in *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 1/2 (1998), 159–80, reprinted with kind permission of Kluwer Academic Publishers. I am indebted to the anonymous readers of these journals for their comments. I am grateful to these journals for permission to use the material in this book. In addition, I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of Cambridge University Press for their detailed comments which made the book better than it would have been otherwise.