

Nationalism comes in a variety of forms

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Sean Danaher published one of his typically thoughtful pieces on Northern Ireland on [Progressive Pulse yesterday](#). It is well worth reading in full, but I want to pull out one thought from it. Sean defines nationalism within the post, as follows:

There are many forms of nationalism, but two of the most widely recognised are civic and ethnic nationalism. Civic nationalism is characterised by blindness to ethnicity, race, colour, religion, gender or language and belief in equal rights for all citizens. Ethnic nationalism is characterised by language, religion, customs and traditions.

The pillars of civic nationalism are sometimes given as: unity by consent, democratic pluralism, liberty and the belief that the individual creates the nation. Those of ethnic nationalism are: unity by ascription, ethnic majority rule, fraternity and the belief that the nation creates the individual.

For many in England - me included - nationalism is a difficult term to embrace. The consequences are too hard to contemplate when what is projected as nationalism is of the type defined by Sean as ethnic nationalism. But that, Sean argues, is an English problem, although it has consequences. There are, of course, ethnic nationalists in other UK member nations. But the fact is that Scottish nationalism is profoundly civic by this definition, as is much Welsh nationalism. And so too is most Irish nationalism now, although maybe less so in the North where it faces ethnic nationalism from Loyalists for a state that few elsewhere think exists.

What is the point for noting this? Firstly to show how rethinking a word can be so useful. Few words have singular meaning.

Second, to highlight a divide in society that is intense and real, but which few probably comprehend sufficiently.

Third, to permit those who are proud to have their nationality to say so without fear of alienating others, which civic nationalism makes possible.

Fourth, to make it clear, as Sean does, that Brexit exploited this divide and there is no

way it can be reconciled in weeks.

Fifth, to give hope that there is a trajectory for nationalism that is not alienating.

Sixth, to remind the English that this is an issue we have ignored.

Seventh, to confirm my suspicion that we cannot do so for much longer.