

7 ETHNICITY, STATE, NATION

Read: Eriksen, Ethnic identity and ideology: 70-94; Ethnicity in history: 95-115.
David Maybury-Lewis, Ethnic groups: 47-79

I. Summary of nationalism

A. Role of liberal ideology?

1. Belief in social, cultural, political evolution: notion of progress
2. Liberal ideology is the underpinning of familiar slogans like the French Revolution's "liberty, equality, fraternity"
 - a. **DISCUSS:** how does the U.S. Declaration of Independence put it?
 - b. Remember: this revolution was mainly one of liberation from colonial power, fight for sovereignty
 - c. Nationalism arrived later
3. But don't equate this meaning of "liberal" with its current meaning of *progressive*—on the political left
 - a. Maybury-Lewis speaks of the *liberal state*, which was the model for nation-building in Europe and liberated colonies
 - 1) Self-determination, republic, democratic, people are citizens, not subjects of a monarch,
 - b. For example, nationalists may want ethnic cleansing (very un-liberal)
 - 1) Despite being politically liberal in some ways
 - a) E.g., anticlerical (anti-religious)
 - c. Another example: nationalism and eugenic reasoning may go together
 - 1) Idea of strengthening the nation, and so may be against birth control, abortion
 - 2) Nicolae Ceaucescu of Romania under the Soviets

- B. Characteristics of nationalism¹:
1. Is primarily a principle that holds that the political and national unit should be congruent
 2. “Nation” is not primary nor an unchanging social entity...is historically grounded, the “nation-state” meaning emerged fairly recently
 - a. Although nationalist sentiment may contend that “a people” (a nation) have lived a long time in the same place
 3. Nations are not natural, God-given, etc.
 - a. This is why nationalists are so interested in what historians are up to
 - 1) Example of anthropologist Anastasia Karakasidou’s research on Greek Macedonians speaking a Balkan language²
 - 2) She was denounced by the Greek Parliament, and received death threats from Greek nationalists living in New York city
 - b. Simon Harrison discusses Greek feelings about use of the word “Macedonia”
 4. Nationalism sometimes takes preexisting cultures and turns them into nations
 - a. Sometimes invents them
 - b. Often obliterates pre-existing cultures
 - c. **DISCUSS**: Examples from Eriksen?
 - d. **DISCUSS**: China and nationalism in Gladney
 5. Nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalisms, but the other way around.
 6. Nationalism emerges only at a point of intersection of politics, technology and social transformation

¹ Hobsbawm agrees with Gellner (1983) in the list that follows.

² Karakasidou, Anastasia N., 1997. *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- a. Particular stage of technological and economic development
- b. Standard languages cannot emerge before printing; need for mass literacy, mass schooling

C. So, nations are dual phenomena

- 1. Constructed by political forces
- 2. But any analysis must include John Stuart Mills's notion of desire (see Eriksen chapter)
 - a. The role of ordinary people's assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests in the process
 - b. By no means do nationalist activists always accurately represent these feelings
 - 1) **DISCUSS:** Examples you can think of?
 - 2) Chechnya: activists drew on the repression they suffered under the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia
 - 3) Who knows what the majority of Chechnyans felt, or feel at present?
 - 4) It is difficult for a researcher to get at these feelings

II. Pre-modern compared to modern states: brief history

A. Pre-modern period

- 1. Tribes
 - a. **DISCUSS:** What do you think of when you hear this word?
 - 1) "Other"
 - 2) Exotic
 - 3) Examples from the movies?
 - b. Tribal societies have classically been seen as:
 - 1) Small-scale (not large populations)

- 2) With their interaction structured around:
 - a) Kinship networks and face-to-face interaction
- c. “Tribal” is an anthropological classification, although a problematic one
- d. Pre-modern, small-scale societies: three types of subsistence modes
 - 1) Hunter-gatherers
 - 2) Horticulturalists
 - a) Gardeners: subsistence mode lacking the plow and draft animals
 - b) Note that horticulturalist societies can in fact be very large—some African kingdoms, for example
 - 3) Nomadic pastoralists
- 2. Contrast with the great pre-modern dynastic states
 - a. Which were characterized by the fourth subsistence mode, agrarian: plow and draft animals
 - b. “The fertile crescent”: Babylonia, etc. were agrarian
- 3. Some pre-modern states were horticulturalist
 - a. New World (Aztec, Maya, Inca)
- 4. In general these great ancient states developed where water was scarce (exception: Maya)
 - a. One hypothesis (overly simple) argues that civilizations developed in arid zones
 - 1) Because there was a need to organize to develop the technology that allowed for optimal water distribution
 - b. As well as develop a socio-political organization that ensured an appropriate distribution

5. More familiar to us: feudal agrarian states in Europe during the Middle Ages
6. These states were not integrated nationally
 - a. Their subjects were locally integrated, under the rule of a member of the nobility who collected tribute
 - b. Socialization and social control were largely handled locally
 - c. Armies tended to be professional, without the ideology of “moral duty of all to fight for one’s country” that we find in nations
7. Compared with modern nation-states these earlier dynastic states:
 - a. Placed few demands on the majority of their citizens
 - 1) Note: oppression, exploitation could be brutal
 - a) Building Egyptian, Mayan pyramids
 - 2) But few demands on them *as citizens*—not much state bureaucracy
 - b. No nation-building was needed because the boundaries were always shifting
 - 1) No sense of a need to have populations within the borders share a culture, language
 - 2) The subject populations just needed to be loyal to the rulers,
 - a) Pay taxes
 - b) Consent to be conscripted as labor (e.g., road-building), etc. or for military
 - c. Pre-modern dynastic kingdoms in Europe weren’t “French” or “British” as they are understood today
 - 1) Inhabitants were *subjects* to a monarch, not *citizens*

III. Modern Period

- A. Ethnic identity formation and boundary maintenance increase

1. Ethnic identities tend to attain their greatest importance in situations of
 - a. Flux, potential ambiguity
 - b. Change
 - c. Resource competition
 - d. Threats against boundaries
 - B. Ethnic identity formation and attention to boundary maintenance are found in societies undergoing modernization:
 1. Industrializing
 2. The scale increases: a large number of people might participate in the same economic system
 3. Pre-modern ideologies were based in kinship, feudalism and religion
 - a. In industrial capitalism context, these were no longer capable of organizing people efficiently
 4. Eriksen provides a number of examples from Africa showing how ethnic formation changes, adapts
- IV. Nationalism and ethnicity
- A. Note that “isms” refer to sets of beliefs, theories, ideologies
 1. **DISCUSS:** meaning of “ideology”?
 2. Two main—often interrelated—meanings for ideology
 - a. First, a pejorative meaning: a given ideology is in fact an illusion, a set of false ideas
 - b. Second meaning: the set of ideas that arise from a definite social class or group
 - B. Definitions of the ideology of nationalism?
 1. Gellner: a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent

- a. But, asks Eriksen, what is “the national unit”?
 - 2. Another: the belief that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones
 - 3. Nationalism holds that the political organization should be ethnic in character in that it represents the interests of a particular ethnic group
 - 4. Another definition: ethnic ideologies that hold that their group should dominate a state
- C. Benedict Anderson’s characterization of nationalism: it posits an **imagined community**
- 1. *Imagined* because members of nations will never know the vast majority of their fellow members; *community* because the ideology holds that members share a culture
 - 2. The same goes for large ethnic groups: they are imagined ethnic communities
 - 3. What’s special to the nationalist “imagined community” is that it is seen to be embedded in the state
 - 4. The national state is imagined by its members as both inherently limited and sovereign
 - 5. The ideology holds that members’ loyalty and attachment should be directed towards the state and the legislative system
- D. So, nationalism is an *ideology* about culture and power
- 1. Self-conscious culture
 - a. By now we understand that nation-building requires “talk about culture”
 - 2. Nationalism *reifies* culture—**DISCUSS**
 - a. Enables people to talk about their culture as though it were a thing, a constant
- E. Additional discussion of theories about the causes of the rise of nationalism
- 1. All scholars mention the role played by modernization

2. All scholars mention the role played by industrialization
3. An article by Segal and Handler³ argues that the rise of nationalism in Europe and the Americas must be seen in the larger context of colonization
 - a. They insist that analyses of nationalism must look at the entire global picture
 - b. They provide a critique of Euro-centric views of the development of nationalism
 - c. They argue that all analyses of nationalism have to examine the political economy of colonialism and the role of racial ideologies in justifying it
 - d. For instance, they argue that we cannot look at British nationalism's evolution
 - 1) Without looking at Ireland as a colony; at Britain's Atlantic coast colonies; at the British West Indies
4. Also, various authors, in addition to Segal and Handler, argue that much of the theoretical characterization of nationalism does not fit the nation-building processes that take place in former colonies
 - a. For example, Eriksen's example of Trinidad: its nationalism is built, not on autochthonous, indigenous people and their culture, nor on ancient folkways being re-discovered
 - 1) But built on forging a nation out of two immigrant populations: African and E. Indian
 - 2) Nationalism consequently looks very different in countries like Trinidad
 - 3) **DISCUSS:** Eriksen's discussion of the changing ethnic formation of East Indians and Blacks in Trinidad?
5. A new kind of nationalist ideology is required if former colonies are to successfully develop into nation-states
 - a. If they are to be capable of creating cohesion and loyalties

³ Daniel Segal and Richard Handler, 1992. How European is nationalism? *Social Analysis* 32: 1-15.

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