

Political Ideologies: Contexts, Ideas, and Practices
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Lec 39 Topic 11 Nationalism Lec 1/5 13:10
Nationalism - Introduction

Well, hello everyone. We're now moving on to our eleventh topic of the twelve topics in our ideology NPTEL course, our NPTEL course on ideologies 2019 -20. The 11th topic, the last but one we're doing, is nationalism. We'll make a start on it, just a start, and we'll go on into detail, next time, into more detail. And we'll conclude with a worked example as before.

Nationalism is, I quote, I'm starting with a quotation from John Dunn, the historian of ideas: he says, "Nationalism is the starkest political shame of the 20th century, the deepest, the most intractable and yet most unanticipated blot on the political history of the world since 1900. But it is also the very tissue of modern political sentiment, the most widespread, the most unthinking, and the most immediate political disposition of all, at least among the literate populations of the modern world."

John Dunn wrote that in 1999. Well, nationalism is a potent force, as we know, in almost all forms of political life. Like conservatism, it is not easily categorized as a single ideology. Like conservatism, it takes a range of forms, several of which share more than one characteristic and it may well be better understood as a range of outlooks, rather than a specific body of theory - and that may also help for the enduring character of nationalism. In addition, nationalism has been associated with many other, many other ideologies, from liberalism through socialism to fundamentalism. And we have already encountered the element of ethnonationalism in certain forms of fundamentalism.

Now the fact that nationalism has a very wide range of forms also means that it is not always regarded as a modern development. Azar Gat, one scholar for example, sees nationalism as one form of political ethnicity. And he identifies it as having been a strong force in empires of very ancient times, such as the Assyrian Empire, which existed in the second millennium BCE; it is a very long time back, we're looking at 3,000 years or so ago. Well Azar Gat also identifies ethnicity in the sense of national membership as a powerful, if not decisive, political element, in the creation and survival of many other ancient empires, including those of ancient India. But he says of ancient India that ethnic diversification occurred at the local level.

Now Gat's wider argument is that forms of nationalism, whether they are modern or premodern, permeate human history. As he says, according to him, they, I quote, "spring

from deep within the human psyche.” We need not take issue with that argument or go into great detail over that argument here. But we should note that the Greek historian Herodotus, 484 to 425 BCE, may have been the first to use the term *ethnos* to mean ‘nation’, even if what, quite what he meant by that is still a subject of argument, and even if it is also still the subject of argument as to whether or not the term ‘nation’ provides a complete translation of the term *ethnos*. I draw that argument from, that point from, a paper by Papastefanou written in 2012.

But what about nationalism in its modern sense? It has emerged as other forms of political organization have declined. These other forms are kingdoms, principalities, and the like. I draw that point from Andrew Heywood. But nationalism may not have been planned or explicitly intended to replace such forms. And the reason for that is that it seems to have had its first modern expression during the French Revolution. During that, it was, among other things, a rallying call for the French people to rise up against their aristocratic oppressors.

But in its modern sense nationalism also has a conceptual relation to another historical development. And that is the idea of sovereignty. That idea arose in its modern form, when many of the major rulers signed the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. That treaty marked the end of the Thirty Years’ War, a truly terrible war, with besieged populations even resorting to cannibalism. That war was mainly fought in what is now Germany. The Thirty Years’ War was fought mainly in what is now Germany, and it involved almost every nation in Europe, in the then Europe, as well as Russia.

It also had a substantial religious motivation, with bitter hostility between the Holy Roman Empire and the increasingly widespread new denomination of Protestantism. And given the physical conditions of travel and communications at the time, in the middle of the 17th century, the Peace of Westphalia took many months to finalize. It also played a part in creating the modern concept of sovereignty over territory and therefore under that concept, rulers would recognize one another’s authority over within designated boundaries, over designated territories.

As we shall see, this element of recognition is central to nationalism and nationalist movements in our time. We mustn’t underestimate the religious character of the 30 Years’ War; one of the principles arising from it was stated as a result of the Peace of Westphalia was ‘Cuius regio, eius religio’, a Latin phrase meaning, ‘Whoever is the ruler shall have their religion followed’. In other words, ‘We follow the religion of the rulers wherever we happen to live’. ‘Cuius regio, eius religio’.

Well, the origins of nationalism, the idea of it and the term itself are certainly of great interest in history of ideas and in history *per se*. But historically, nationalism has had an enormous impact on the human world. From, you know, from one of its earliest expressions in the French Revolution, 1789 onwards, through movements for the unification of formerly separate territories, on to powerful and successful demands for the end of colonial subject hood, and more recent claims to separation from existing countries on the grounds of unrecognized or oppressed nationhood.

So nationalism has had an enormous impact on the human world throughout, and continues to do so. Well, perhaps the earliest modern claim to nationhood was made as I said, in the French Revolution; the sufferings of the people under Louis XVI and his predecessors had reached a point where the public rose up in the name of the nation. The uprising was extremely violent, probably expressing the bitterness of the leaders and some of their followers, but for us the conceptual point is this: the people who put an end to their status as subjects of the crown declared themselves citizens of the nation. Such a development is relatively familiar to us today. And so are symbols like national flags, national anthems, stereotypes of national identity, and customs and practices, which are considered to be or claimed to be typical of particular nations, or sometimes even definitive of nations.

France's National Day is the 14th of July, Bastille Day, the day on which the French public storms the notorious Bastille prison. India for its part has what are in effect, two national days - the 15th of August, marking the day the country achieved independence from Britain in 1947 and the 26th of January, the day in 1950 on which the Republic of India came into being.

Well, the propagation of such symbols and related language and terminology and rhetoric was greatly aided and facilitated in the nineteenth century as literacy and the mass media, at that time newspapers and magazines, as they spread, literacy and the mass media spread, and the propagation of nationalistic symbols and related language and terminology and rhetoric was greatly facilitated by the advent of, by the spread, of literacy and the advent of newspapers and the print, the print media.

But nationalism as an ideology in the nineteenth century was also located in a particular social class. This was the mercantile upper middle class, which had emerged in the previous century, the eighteenth century, and this class was overwhelmingly committed to liberalism. That - liberalism - meant the spread of constitutional government, with laws intended to be applied equally to all. Now, for that it was necessary to specify the geographical area within which any one constitution would hold.

And therefore, the idea of national boundaries gained even more currency in the eighteenth and then the nineteenth century than it had inherited from the Peace of Westphalia. Now, in view of the many forms nationalism takes, and in view of its association with many different ideologies, it can look amorphous - shapeless, and difficult to characterize. But certain themes or concepts seem to be shared by most forms of this ideology. It is therefore an ideology and not just a political sentiment or political doctrine.

Well, we'll list the main themes here and we'll then go on to them in the next lecture or two. The main themes in nationalism are the nation, community or organic community, self-determination, and identity and identity politics. I'll list those again, and then we'll stop there and go on to lecture two later on. So the main themes in nationalism are, there's four of them, the nation, the second one is community or organic community. The third is self-determination. And the fourth is identity and identity politics. All of those are very recognizable concepts in our world today, and we no doubt encounter examples of them and expressions of them all the time. We'll come back to these and look at them in more detail next time. That's the end of this lecture, introducing the theme of nationalism; we'll come back to it next time.