

Political Ideologies: Contexts, Ideas, and Practices
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Wk11 Topic 11 Nationalism lec 2/5 33:26
Nationalism - main themes. The nation; community or organic community; self-determination; identity

Hello, everyone. We can resume our Ideologies 19-20 course; we're in the middle of our 11th topic, which is nationalism. We made a start on it, well we can now move on, we've looked at, we've done an introduction to nationalism. We can now look at certain common themes that run through it

Because nationalism takes many different forms and has an association with many different ideologies, it can look amorphous or shapeless or difficult to characterize, but it does, most forms of it share certain themes or concepts, and that's what makes nationalism an ideology and not just a political sentiment or a party political doctrine or something like that.

Now when we wound up last time, we identified, very briefly, the main themes in nationalism. I'll give you the list again. And then we'll take them turn by turn, right, there are four main themes, the nation, community or organic community, self-determination, and identity and identity politics. So those are the four main themes. We'll start with the nation.

The idea of a nation is obviously central to nationalism. But it's virtually impossible to say or specify what a nation is or what constitutes a nation. Very often, the claim is made that a nation is made up of a group of people who share a common culture and common traditions. These are often taken to be such things as shared language, shared religion and history, and often a common geographical area.

Now the problem is that, for every one of the criteria that we might regard as necessary for nationhood, significant exceptions exist. For example, Kurdish communities are found in South-eastern Turkey, North-western Iran, North-eastern Iraq, and Syria. Kurdish people often see themselves as a nation, and that is a claim which is perfectly intelligible. They also have the Kurdish language in common.

Yet it is only in Iraq, in North-eastern Iraq, that Kurds have a designated territory. Specifically, this is an autonomous self-governing province, which also elects representatives to the Iraqi assembly in Baghdad, when general elections are held. Now, this is very significant because Iraqi Kurdistan is a politically constituted province - and there is no question of the exclusion of say, non-Kurdish Iraqis from Iraqi Kurdistan. So, non-Kurdish

Iraqis are just as much residents and occupants of Iraqi Kurdistan as anyone else. They have to be Iraqi citizens, just as, at present, Kurdish Iraqis are.

Now Tibetans constitutional for example of this, they can reasonably claim to constitute a nation despite the fact that Tibet was annexed by China in 1951. But Tibet had earlier - for nearly three centuries - had earlier been administered by the Qing Dynasty, from 1644 to 1912. That is the Chinese Qing Dynasty, and even when Tibet was under something resembling self-rule by the Dalai Lama, from 1912 to 1951, the region was effectively under British rule. Similarly, in several of the northern provinces of Sri Lanka, strong claims to nationhood have long been made by Tamil-speaking leaders for the creation of a Tamil nation, and at the end of a terrible twenty-year civil war, there was renewed discussion, in Sri Lanka, of federal or quasi-federal arrangements, with the apparent intention of giving some recognition to Sri Lankan Tamil claims to some kind of nationhood, some kind of *de facto* nationhood, so there were discussions at the end of this terrible civil war, renewed discussions about quasi-federal or federal arrangements, and the intention was to give some kind of recognition to Tamil claims, without creating a separate self-governing state.

In that connection, we need to note that there has, there seems to be no serious claim by any political body that the Tamil speaking regions of Sri Lanka be united with, say the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. In Tamil Nadu, Tamil, you know, which does involve a range of dialects other than Sri Lankan Tamil, Tamil is the majority language but only the majority language; that is all it is, significantly important, yes, but still a majority language among other languages also spoken in Tamil Nadu. No great surprise.

But, for our purposes, we need to note that there's been no serious claim by any political body that the Tamil-speaking regions of Sri Lanka be united across the Palk Strait with the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Nevertheless, the Tamil language is one of the main unifying factors in Sri Lankan Tamil's claim to nationhood.

But in other areas of the world, languages are shared without any corresponding claims to national identity. English is spoken in the United Kingdom, where it is the most widely spoken language. English is also the language of Australia and New Zealand. But no claim is made that the peoples of these three states constitute a single English nation. It's not clear what that claim would even mean, what would make it intelligible. It would, furthermore, be at best implausible to regard say, even those who are first-language English speakers in South Asia, and in the former British territories in East or West Africa, it would be implausible

at best to regard first-language English speakers in those parts of the world as even potential members of an English nation.

Now in addition, a common language makes no difference at all to things like, often deep and violent religious divisions in some parts of the world, for example, in the devolved British region of Northern Ireland, which does elect its own assembly under the Good Friday Agreement 1998; and where the assembly has been recently reconvened in, as a necessity for, the United Kingdom's recent - a few days ago - departure from the European Union. But English with a Northern Ireland accent is spoken throughout the province as a first language and as a language of the province. It is the language of the province. The main language of the province - there are others who speak Irish Gaelic or dialects of Irish Gaelic, certainly, but English is the language, main language of the province. But this common language makes no difference at all to what have been deep, bitter and often very violent religious divisions, that is, between the Protestants and the Catholics in Northern Ireland.

In Northern Ireland, the majority of Protestants, favour, or the evidence is that they have strongly favoured, until relatively recently, and the majority continues to favour, continuing membership of the United Kingdom. Well, most of the minority Catholic community favours union with the Republic of Ireland.

In any case, at the time I wrote the first edition of the book, the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, both members of the, were both members of the European Union, and the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic - about 310 miles long, if I'm not mistaken, perhaps about, what's that, I don't know, 480, 500 kilometres, something like that, well, that was an open border, whether it'll remain one after the British departure from the European Union, we don't know; and we have to recognize that the border is in effect an open one and it may be physically very difficult to close it, precisely because the two economies are so closely intertwined. Now, the point we need to make is that a common language does not automatically unite the different religious major sects in the Republic, in Northern Ireland.

So, language by itself is probably not sufficient to define a nation. Okay, would religion be sufficient ground for the concept of a nation? British India, as we know only too well, was partitioned into India and Pakistan, in the years leading to the British departure in 1947. The division - Partition - was at least in theory founded on the principle of religious - significant - religious division and difference.

The resulting upheaval and mass slaughter were truly terrible. The consequences are very obvious even today. And today, as we know, what were two countries are now three countries - India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh; they all have very substantial numbers of people of all faiths. And India, by constitution, is a secular state, where it doesn't matter which faith you belong to, or if you have no faith, or deny the existence of a god or any such thing. As we have seen that, in effect, confirmed in the Shafin Jahan judgment, which we examined in our worked example on liberalism. But, is a single faith enough? Well, the evidence is that it certainly is not enough to constitute a nation because religious or doctrinal divisions do not always generate claims of nationhood.

The United Kingdom is an interesting example; the official state religion has been the Anglican faith since King Henry the Eighth rejected the authority of the Pope, and made himself Head of the Church of England in 1534. The Church of England had itself been founded, if I'm not mistaken, around 660 C.E., but remained under the authority of the Pope; Henry VIII rejected the authority of the Pope, made himself Head of the Church of England in 1534, and in effect created the Anglican faith at that time.

Now the country, the United Kingdom, has a wide range of Christian denominations. But these have not given rise to rival nationalisms. We need to note that - a range of Christian denominations, well, nobody's actually claiming national membership on that basis. In the United Kingdom, nobody's claiming national membership on the basis of religious membership.

The same holds for the United States, where any number of Christian denominations and other faiths coexist. But none has been put forward as a claim to, as a sole claim to the founding principle of nationhood. This holds also in Poland, in Italy and Brazil, the Philippines, and the Republic of Ireland. In each of those countries, the Catholic faith has overwhelmingly the largest number of followers, but none of them actually constitutes a Catholic nation. I draw that point from Andrew Heywood's book on ideologies. So, well, language isn't sufficient. Religion isn't sufficient. Neither will do by themselves as a grounding for a claim to nationhood, to being a nation.

What about community? Well, the idea of community has arisen as a kind of founding claim or foundational claim to nationhood. It's arisen partly in response to the many problems with the idea that either language or religion is foundational to nationalism. So, various theorists have argued that nationalism has to be understood in the light of people's self-understandings. That is the idea that peoples around the world have of themselves. As we

have seen, particular peoples may share languages or faiths, and yet not consider themselves collectively to be a nation.

One response to this has been that languages and faiths have to be seen like other forms of commonality, such as class or gender. And therefore, that any of these will be pertinent in particular contexts, without itself being a foundation for the idea of a nation. According to this line of argument, a nation is some kind of organic entity, more like ties of kinship, and it has its origins, according to this argument, in primordial or ancient cultural inheritances which long predate modern states.

This also implies that membership of a modern state is closely tied to historical ethnicity. The term ethnies, e-t-h-n-i-e-s, has been used for such similar groupings. I'm taking that from a theory **put forward by Smith, writing in 1986 - it's been cited in** Heywood. It's a secondary citation that I have done, that I've used here.

So one implication of the idea of community as being some sort of primordial ancient, ancient cultural inheritance, or assemblage of inheritances. This idea has been, is the idea that national membership is closely tied to historical ethnicity and it's been [used by] the term ethnies, e-t-h-n-i-e-s has been used for such earlier groupings. But today's nations are not simple or direct developments from the ethnies that Smith was talking about. Today's nations are often extremely or even enormously large, either geographically or in the size of their populations. Russia uses eleven time zones spanning 10 hours. China's population at the time of writing is about 1.38 billion, that was when I wrote the first edition of the book, about two or three years ago; India's population is about 1.34 billion. Even in very small countries, it is inconceivable, barely conceivable, that people can that people can think of one another as some sort of extended tribal family. What would it mean to have an extended family of 1.34 billion people? What *would* it mean? So it's far from clear what it might mean to think that we could be connected as a family to very large numbers of people in the modern state, and it's far from clear what it might mean to have the, what sort of connections or obligations we would have towards one another if that situation did obtain.

Suppose, we said, say in India, we had a family of 1.34 billion people. In what way would be would we be connected, say to the 794,000,002,300 and 253,00,185th person, that we encountered if we could actually encounter all of them? What kind of connections and obligations would we have towards people on this scale? But nevertheless the idea of a nation endures almost all around the world.

And some have proposed that this idea has put down deep roots, the idea of a nation has put down deep roots in modern societies, and that it has done so, put down these deep roots, even if a return to premodern or primordial societies is unthinkable. So according to such theories that the idea of a nation has put down deep roots, the value of which, according to such theories, is that this idea of a nation provides social and other forms of cohesion in today's much more individualistic societies.

That would make the idea of a nation much closer to what the German philosopher Ferdinand Tönnies called *Gemeinschaft*, in the sense of community. So a nation conceived in that way would be much closer to *Gemeinschaft* as community, than to say *Gesellschaft*, which is - *Gesellschaft* carries a sense of much looser and often contractual associations. It's actually used in Germany and contemporary German as a commercial term - so Tönnies says, using the term *Gemeinschaft* in the sense of community rather than *Gesellschaft* as contractual association. Of course, as we've seen, liberalism does often involve contractual ideas of membership of the state. But one result of the idea that a nation has, the idea of a nation has put down deep roots today, has got deep roots, one result is that the nation, the idea of a nation has a powerful role in our imagination.

Benedict Anderson has articulated this in detail. He's argued that nations are, I quote, "imagined communities"; the phrase has gained very wide currency, it was the title of a book by Anderson written, I think, about 25 or 30 years ago. This also means that we can see ourselves, imagine ourselves and see ourselves as being members of our nation without needing direct contact with every other member of it. And it means we can share various common understandings of ourselves and our fellow members even if we're very far away, either geographically or historically. This is not surprising; if we find ourselves in far-flung parts of the world, we might find ourselves having an easy connection with fellow citizens whom we meet in far-flung parts. Or we might open up our computers or in our old fashioned way, read newspapers from our part of the world or open up our computers and look at the press from our part of the world, just see what's happening back there, and so on, nothing unusual about that. But Anderson's point here is that we can share various common understandings of ourselves and our fellow nationals, fellow members of an imagined community, even if we're geographically or even historically a long way away from them.

Anderson says that communities therefore are to be distinguished not by whether they are genuine or false, but by, I quote, "by the style in which they're imagined." So it's a style of imagining the pattern, the tone of imagining, that makes a nation, makes the imagined

community a nation. Anderson adds here that until recently, Javanese society in Java had no word for the abstract term 'society'.

Anderson goes on to say, Anderson goes on to say that in pre-revolutionary France, aristocrats would not have identified themselves as members of a ruling class or ruling aristocracy. But they'd have called themselves the duke of a place or a relative of another aristocrat and so on. That's at the beginning of Anderson's book on *Imagined Communities*.

But there's a problem and it is the question of how an imagined identity, like the nation can command such loyalty or devotion that millions or tens of millions are willing to lay down their lives for it, even if they've known one another for generations and grown up together. Michael Ignatieff writes of the time he spent on the Serbian-Croatian front line, during the terrible nationalist wars in the Balkans in the early 90s, the early 1990s. I quote, "this is a village war," he says, "everyone knows everyone else. They all went to school together. Before the war, some of them worked in the same garage. They dated the same girls. Every night they call each other up on the CB radio and exchange insults by name. Then they go back to try to kill each other. This was a truly terrible war."

People who'd grown up together ended up slaughtering one another. They'd even talk to each other on the radio. When the day's fighting ended at night, they dated the same girls, they worked in the same garage, they went to school together. What is it that made them nationals of Serbia or Croatia or, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia rather than the Republika Srpska and so on?

Well, Anderson does recognize that the idea of a nation or its history therefore can't be reduced to official histories or official documents. And he recognizes that the kind of attachment he sees as central to national membership seems to be at its strongest in a time of war. But that also implies that nationalism itself is a construction, and even perhaps a myth, the argument here is that historical continuity, and cultural homogeneity, or purity, are themselves ideological creations.

And these creations then conceal - conceal - class relations and class interests. It has been said often enough about the First World War, that it was a war in which the elites of Europe sent the working class and the peasantry of Europe to slaughter one another by the million. Therefore, it's not implausible that nationalism itself is a construct, and that the idea of historical continuity or cultural homogeneity, or even cultural purity or racial purity or whatever, or national purity, are themselves ideological relations.

They conceal class relations and class interests, which can themselves be enormously powerful in undermining the idea of a nation. So more specifically, according to this line of reasoning, powerful classes have invented the ideas of historical and cultural unity. The nation itself becomes a creation, even an invention, which conceals class interests. And the argument is, therefore, that it was nationalism that invented nations. It's a point made by Eric Hobsbawm in 1983, and I have drawn the citation from Heywood, writing in 2007.

And we've already noted an example of this in the way the United States has, until very recently, involved almost no recognition of the foundational role slavery played in the establishment and consolidation of capitalism in the United States. That has had a lot of very good attention from a number of very good scholars over the last five or ten years. And we might then say, well, what is it about the idea of the United States - who devised it, where did it come from? And how is it that this idea has until very recently involved, in effect, the obliteration of the foundational role of slavery in both the establishment and the consolidation of United States capitalism. How has that happened?

Well, that's the kind of issue that Anderson's argument leaves the way open for, (i)t leaves unaddressed, and we would need to address it if we were to develop Anderson's argument further. So - where does that take us? Well, in response to problems with the idea of language and religion as foundational, in response to the idea that community is foundational, people said, well, yes, we recognize that there are problems with those, that we end up in near-incoherence, we don't end up with the nation that we thought we were going to end up with. What about the idea of self-determination? This term figures less in today's political discourse than it did during the first two or three decades after the Second World War. Well, at that time the two major imperial powers of the previous two and a half centuries, Britain and France were rapidly leaving their imperial territories, or were being thrown out, as happened to France when the Vietcong defeated French forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

Across Africa and Asia in the period after the Second World War, subject peoples claimed and usually won the right to self-determination. Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations states that one of the four purposes of the UN is, I quote, "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace."

Since 1945, when the UN was founded, large numbers of new countries - which are called states in international law as I'm sure you know - large numbers of new countries, new

states, have been founded in the recognition of the Article 1 principle, the right to self-determination. The UN has been directly involved in at least one such case. Just that one example was the creation of Timor-Leste in 2002.

The country had been, formerly, East Timor, and had been a Portuguese colony since the early 17th century. It was then part of Indonesia after Indonesia attained independence from the Dutch empire, which was also rapidly retreating after the Second World War. Now Indonesia annexed East Timor in 1975, fairly violently, there was talk of international intervention, perhaps from Australia under UN auspices or other auspices, but the annexation was very brutal indeed. The independence movement in East Timor was brutally suppressed, and things got to the point where, in the early years of the 21st century, Timor-Leste as it's now called, achieved independence only after the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan persuaded the Indonesian President, a general named, if I'm not mistaken, B. J. Habibie, the Indonesian President and General, was persuaded by Kofi Annan to accept UN intervention in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

If I'm not mistaken, as soon as Secretary General Kofi Annan got Indonesian agreement, a motion was passed by the Security Council, and I think Indonesia accepted Australian and Malaysian troops, who oversaw a peaceful removal of Indonesian sovereignty, suzerainty, over - perhaps suzerainty's a much better word - over what became Timor-Leste; it was done under UN auspices under the UN principle of the right to self-determination.

Now that principle is not the first such to be stated in international affairs. The United States President Woodrow Wilson put forward a similar principle as part of the victorious powers' proposals for the reconstruction of Europe after the First World War. The underlying thinking was that nations are largely homogeneous linguistic and cultural entities; we've met that idea before. Therefore, as largely homogeneous, linguistic and cultural identities, according to the Wilson doctrine, nations therefore identify (single, identify, identifiable) occupy identifiable single areas or territories. So the theory was that nations are largely homogeneous linguistically and culturally, therefore, they all occupy broadly identifiable single nations or territories. In other words, Wilson seemed to think that nations and states were coterminous, that they were exactly correlated with territorial regions.

And we'll see soon that this conception caused terrible problems. We also see that it may well involve very serious misconceptions about the very nature of human association. We'll see that as we proceed. Well, those are the main ideas behind conceptions of, behind foundational or purportedly foundational conceptions, to the idea of a nation. None of them

in the end adds up. And we shall need in our next lecture to go on and look at things like identity politics, which have been put forward as alternatives and various other concepts. We'll look at the issues around those, nationalism based on questions of identity or theories of identity politics. These are, in part, derivatives of the idea of community - community has its own enormous problems, and it's been claimed that identity is therefore an alternative. I'll just introduce the idea of identity politics here briefly, and we'll come back to it next time. Well, what about identity politics?

Well, nationalism, like conservatism and fascism, relies on and develops conceptions of identity. And like conservatism and fascism, it does this by drawing upon territory, religion and language, and on less obviously tangible things such as will, memory, and political loyalty.

This also has the effect of reminding or telling people who they are and what brings them together as a people. In its stronger or more strident forms, it can inculcate a sense of destiny or purpose. These less tangible elements may explain how it is that nationalism is often very prominent in politics, and why nationalist - it also goes some way to explaining why nationalist politicians or writers are often very popular, in some cases for long periods - even if, as we shall see, much of the theories of nationalism is contradictory and even incoherent.

We'll come back to identity politics in more detail. We've already met certain senses of national, of identity politics in liberalism - when we looked at it, when we met it in liberalism, when we looked at multiculturalism and the implications that cultures are easily defined or foundational to people's identity or sense of identity. So, well, we'll see that nationalism is, much of the theory of nationalism is contradictory and even incoherent, but nevertheless, the ideas are far reaching and have lasted a long time. And we'll come back to that next time. So we'll develop on identity politics when we meet next time.