Theories and Practices of Nationalism - Assignment 1

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Question: *How are nations like communities? Is there is a difference between the communities which are formed by civic and ethnic nationalisms?*

(Write an essay (800-1200 words) explaining your answer. Draw on examples of at least two nations and nationalisms other than India.)

Word count: 1248

Introduction

Most widely-accepted notions of nations today have a common grounding in considering them to be *communities* of people: from Stalin and Seton-Watson's definitions to Benedict Anderson's. But the manner of these people "coming together", as it were, also differs from one nation to another. The *conception* of a nation as formed by a particular people affects how the final "community" is. We attempt to explore both the community nature of nations, and how said nature changes with the ideological imagination of it.

How are Nations Like Communities?

Communities as a horizontal brotherhood

To understand the community aspect, we look at Benedict Anderson's proposed 'working definition' of a nation as an "imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". Why does he define the nation in terms of community? It is observed in the modern nation that people who may have nothing in common with each other - language, ethnicity, political affiliation - who may never even meet, consider themselves to be connected in some way due to sharing a nationality by chance of birth. Despite whatever inequality exists, the nation is still conceived as a horizontal 'brotherhood', a comradeship among equals. People go to war, potentially sacrificing themselves for their 'brothers and sisters' of the community, that they will likely never meet. It has some

markings of a community, but it is not the traditional Gemeinschaft [1].

Nation in the framework of Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft

This begs comparison to the traditional imagining of a community. As discussed in the lecture, the key components of a Gemeinschaft are:

- social order based on *personal ties* (of 1000 or so at maximum)
- custom and tradition as the moral code
- family (birth) as the guiding force for social status and economic roles
- fulfillment at the cost of individual movement.

None of these apply to any nation of millions that for all intents and purposes seems more aligned with Gessellschaft instead. But on closer examination, this too does not match. *There is a distinction between the nation and its call for a sovereign state*; social contract and mutual consent is shared among the citizens and the state but not with the 'Nation' itself. So what is this community? Ernest Gellner argues that "it (nationalism) *invents* nations where they do not exist", taking pains to establish the 'falsity' of this community [2]. Anderson opts to call it an 'imagined' community instead, noting that his peer's statement implies the existence of 'true' communities of the scale to be juxtaposed to nations, and also that all communities larger than primordial villages with face-to-face contact are, in fact, imagined [3].

A short correspondence between nationalism and religion

On that note, a good comparison to align the perspective of national community to is the imagined community of religion. The community of strangers of the same religious faith is driven by their common faith, the sacred (and equidistant) language, a common 'fraternity'. It provides an ideological perspective similar to that of nationalism, only the latter is in fact "intellectually poorer". We need only look at Kohn's words in *The Nature of Nationalism*

> … man's loyalty was due to his church or religion; a *heretic* put himself out of the pale of society in the same way that a *"traitor" to his nation* does today. [4]

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[1]Anderson, B. R. O. G. (1991). Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. London: Verso. Pages 5-7

[2]Gellner, E. (1964). Thought and change P. 169. London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson. http://archive.org/details/thoughtchange0000gell *Emphasis added*

[3]Anderson, B. R. O. G. (1991). Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. London: Verso. Pages 5-7

[4]Kohn, H. (1939). The Nature of Nationalism. The American Political Science Review, 33(6), 1001–1021. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/1948728 *Emphasis added*

Is there a difference between the communities which are formed by civic and ethnic nationalism?

There is a difference. But it isn't black-and-white. Most sovereign nations today [5] appear to have some form of civic basis in their constitutions and laws for naturalized citizenship - mentioning, in some cases, the migrating individual's national status too. Some founded on civic principles have shown ethno-nationalist sentiments of late (eg: USA [6]). But a difference still exists for ethnically-*imagined* nations [7] [8], be it in their incorporation as by constitution (think Israel [9]), or in the popular imagination of the residents (consider India).

A quick demonstration of why popular Indian imagination is ethnic - consider how the population deifies the achievements of non-citizens with any degree of Indian descent as an Indian achievement, despite the individual's own national alignment which may not match this imagination. Or even in the behaviour towards those who don't "look Indian".

Theoretical differences distinguishing the two

Why should there be a difference?

It's in the imagination of a nation. Hans Kohn talked of "western" (civic) and "eastern" (ethnic) nationalisms [10], and the motivations for each highlights the difference in the imagination that forms aforementioned imagined communities.

Civic nationalism is based on principles of individual rights. The State precedes the nation - the nation here is no clarion call for sovereignty against an 'other', but rather a *structure that aids the exploration of individual liberty.* Kohn examines this ideation through John Milton in Puritan England:

> With him nationalism… was the affirmation of individual freedom from authority, the self-assertion of personality *in face of its own*

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[5]Based on a brief survey, all states allow some form of naturalization in order to be a citizen of the country, with some of them specifying nationality as well. However, it isn't as "easy" for some if the to-be immigrant has no familial connection to the State. Bhutan requires 30 years of residency with no record of remonstrances against the government, Kuwait requires 20 years along with the requirement of being a Muslim. Israel and China too, although we will be discussing those at length later.

[6]Bonikowski, B., & DiMaggio, P. (2016). Varieties of American Popular Nationalism. American Sociological Review, 81(5), 949–980. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122416663683

[7]Kuwaiti Nationality Law. (n.d.). Retrieved September 1, 2020, from https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/83364/91990/F734821664/KWT83364.pdf

[8]Bhutan Citizenship Act, 1985. (n.d.). Retrieved September 1, 2020, from https://www.nab.gov.bt/assets/uploads/docs/acts/2014/Bhutan_Citizen_Act_1985Eng.pdf

[9]Safran, W. (2016). Citizenship and Nationality in Democratic Systems: Approaches to Defining and Acquiring Membership in the Political Community: International Political Science Review. P. 13-15 https://doi.org/10.1177/019251297018003006

[10]Kohn, H. (1965). Nationalism its Meaning and History. Revised Edition Princton, NJ.

government or church [11]

The nation is manifestation of a code, not a people. The community, others with like-minded interests. At least in its conception, there is no ethnic limitation imposed. Anyone with aligned goals can join the nation and further it.

Ethnic nationalism, on the other hand, "emerges as protests against existing social structure". It's a call for sovereignty from an oppressor. The community rallied around the cause of sovereignty can have arbitrary commonality, but necessarily includes a supposed shared history, a 'glorious past' where the community once was and must strive to return to through the efforts of individual members. This community is thus limited.

With the theory behind us, we consider examples of each.

Imaginations of ethnic nationalism in China, Israel, and more

Israel is the classic example of a nation with Ethnic roots - the UN resolution announcing its creation refers to it as a "Jewish State" [12]. Such is prominently visible in its naturalization laws, where the **Law of Return** allows for citizenship to be conferred solely on Jewish ethnicity on three months of residence, opposed to three years required [13] for regular naturalization.

China is another prominent nation that not only requires a common territorial history, but also ethnic. The Han form a majority in the nation - 91.6% in total [14] - and "Ethnicity and nationality have become almost interchangeable for China's Han" [15]. Naturalisation is already a tough task, as despite laws governing that permanent residents without familial connections can become nationals [16], there are only 1448 naturalized citizens in the most populated country in the world [17]. Adding to that is the consideration of the Han as ethnically "pure", with minorities like the Uighurs sent to camps for not *being*

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[11] Kohn, H. (1965). Nationalism its Meaning and History P. 16-17. Revised Edition Princton, NJ.

[12] Safran, W. (2016). Citizenship and Nationality in Democratic Systems: Approaches to Defining and Acquiring Membership in the Political Community: International Political Science Review. P. 13-15 https://doi.org/10.1177/019251297018003006

[13] Apply to be naturalized if you are a permanent resident. (n.d.). GOV.IL. Retrieved September 2, 2020, from https://www.gov.il/en/service/request_for_citizenship_of_a_person_who_holds_pemanent_residency

[14] CIA China Summary. (n.d.). Retrieved September 1, 2020, from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/attachments/summaries/CH-summary.pdf

[15] The upper Han. (n.d.). The Economist. Retrieved September 1, 2020, from https://www.economist.com/briefing/2016/11/19/the-upper-han

[16] Application for Naturalisation as a Chinese National | Immigration Department. (n.d.). Retrieved September 1, 2020, from https://www.immd.gov.hk/eng/services/chinese_nationality/Application_for_Naturalization_as_a_Chinese_National.html

[17] The upper Han. (n.d.). The Economist. Retrieved September 1, 2020, from https://www.economist.com/briefing/2016/11/19/the-upper-han

this imagination of the nation [18].

Imaginations of the "civic" nations

In contrast we consider the United States of America. Arguably among the first nations to be founded on the basis of principles:

> What held the new nation together was an idea, the idea of liberty under law as expressed in the Constitution. [19]

The (non White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) view of American nationalism is civic. A citizen is so due to their allegiance to the Constitution, and ethnicity plays no role, leading to the nation's reputation as a "melting pot".

It so happens that this is *not* the only view of American nationalism [20]. Reasonably popular imagination of the nation tends to make ethnic restrictions on membership, and this is not unique to the United States (think India again). Like aforementioned, there's significant mish-mash of the two, and it remains to be seen which branch will prevail at the end of it all.

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[18] Up to one million detained in China's mass "re-education" drive. (n.d.). Retrieved September 2, 2020, from https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/09/china-up-to-one-million-detained/

[19] Kohn, H. (1965). Nationalism its Meaning and History P. 19-20. Revised Edition Princton, NJ.

[20] Bonikowski, B., & DiMaggio, P. (2016). Varieties of American Popular Nationalism. American Sociological Review, 81(5), 949–980. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122416663683