



What is a Nation? What is its “Ism”?

- Theories and Practices of Nationalism
- HSS444 – Monsoon 2020
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Nation and its Synonyms

- **Country:** an area of land that has its own government, army, etc.
- **Kingdom:** a country ruled by a king or queen
- **State:** a country, its government, laws and institutions
- **Land:** a country, referred to mostly in terms of its geography
- **Region:** an particular territory identifiable as distinct from others
- **Polity:** a society or state considered as a political unit
- **People:** men, women, and children who have a common identifier
- **Community:** people who consider themselves similar by some attribute



Nation

- Root of the word is the Latin *nationem* "birth, origin; breed, stock, kind, species; race of people, tribe."
 - Which itself comes from *nasci* "be born"
- "a race of people an aggregation of persons of the same **ethnic family** and speaking the same **language**,"
- "a political society composed of subjects or citizens with **common territory, history, laws,** and **culture**"
- "A nation is a community of people, whose members are bound together by a sense of **solidarity**, a common **culture**, a national **consciousness**."

~Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, 1977

Features of a Nation

- Common

- Ethnicity, Language, Territory, History, Laws, Culture
- Sense of solidarity
- National Consciousness (is that “ism”?)

- But are these sufficient?

- Are these even necessary?

- Are these features contradictory?

Questions to Think About?

- Is membership of a Nation voluntary or involuntary?
- Who decides the membership to a nation?
 - Individual or Community
- States can emerge, grow, weaken, die
 - Can Nations?
- Do people of a Nation have common economic interests?





Nation's Sovereignty

- Are all Nations equal?
 - Do we live in a world where all nations are equal members?
 - United Nations?
- Can a nation sustain/survive without political autonomy?
- Is every nation sovereign?
- What happens to a nation which does not have political independence?

“Scientific Definition”

- Thus I am driven to the conclusion that no ‘scientific definition’ of a nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists. All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one. It is not necessary that the whole of the population should so feel, or so behave, and it is not possible to lay down dogmatically a minimum percentage of a population which must be so affected. When a significant group holds this belief, it possesses ‘national consciousness’.

~ Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States*, 1977

What is an Ideology?

- Way of understanding the world; System-justifying worldview
- “prepackaged units of interpretation that spread because of basic human motives to understand the world, avoid existential threat, and maintain valued interpersonal relationships”
- "cultural beliefs that justify particular social arrangements"
 - “ideology in a society is passed along through the society's major social institutions, such as the media, the family, education, and religion”
- Political belief system

National-ism

- Nationalism as Ideology
 - What defines identity of an individual within the nation
 - Proclaims its primacy in defining identity
- Nationalism as Practice
 - Putting national community first
 - Nation-Building
 - Defending the Nation
 - Identifying weaknesses and strengths of Nation
- Does Nation Come first or the individual who makes the nation?