

Early Academic Theories of Nationalism

- Theories and Practices of Nationalism
- HSS444 – Monsoon 2020
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Three Scholars

- **Max Weber**: Famous for work on European modernisation and nature of State. Main non-Marxist sociological theorist of 20th century.
- **E. H. Carr**: Historian of Russian Revolution and inter-war Europe. British left-liberal.
- **Hans Kohn**: Philosopher and historian of Nationalism. German Jewish ancestry, fought for Austria-Hungary in WWI. Conservative Liberal

Max Weber Defines Nationalism

- Nationalism is based on “sentiments of prestige”
- There is no economic origin for these sentiments
- But there are “material” interests in pushing nationalism
- It is partly these material interests, partly values
- Nationalism is, “the idea of the state as an imperialist power structure demanding unqualified devotion”.

Weber: What Nationalism Is Not?

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- None of the following common attributes is necessary
 1. Language
 2. Religious Creed
 3. Social and Ethnic Structures
 4. Descent or “blood”
 - Nations are **still in the making**
 - Examples from Poland, Alsatian region, Austria, Switzerland, Jews of Europe, Russia and America...
 - Chinese were considered “race” just 15 years back, now a nation
 - “a group of people under certain conditions may attain the quality of a nation through specific behaviour, or they may claim this quality as an ‘attainment’ –and within a short span of time at that”.

Weber : Middle Class Ideology

- Who is making these Nations?
- “unbroken scale of quite varied and highly changeable attitudes towards the idea of the ‘nation’ is to be found among social strata and also within single groups”
- “The scale extends from emphatic affirmation to emphatic negation and finally complete indifference”.
- **Emphatic negation**: socialist politics and their supporters, who are primarily workers and the poor, destitute. This is “rather diminishing at the present time”.
- **Complete indifference**: the very rich, the capitalists, those who are in power; as they already control the State institutions
- **Emphatic affirmation**: the middle classes, they do not have the political power from controlling state institutions nor do they have the political power of controlling large masses of people

Weber: Nationalism as Middle Class Politics

- Middle class is the carrier of the culture and the values which it propagates as national
- It is the primary class for affirming and propagating the nation idea
- Sentiments of national values/culture help attain **Prestige** (Status)
- "...the idea of the nation for its advocates stands in very intimate relation to 'prestige' interests. The most energetic manifestations of the idea... have contained the legend of a providential 'mission'. Those to whom the representatives of the idea zealously turned were expected to shoulder this mission... this mission can be thought of only as a specific 'culture' mission. The significance for the 'nation' is usually anchored in the superiority, or at least the irreplaceability, of the culture values that are to be preserved and developed only through the cultivation of the peculiarity of the group. It therefore goes without saying that the intellectuals, as we have in a preliminary fashion called them, are to a specific degree predestined to propagate the 'national idea', just as those who wield power in the polity provoke the idea of the state. By 'intellectuals' we understand a group of men who by virtue of their peculiarity have special access to certain achievements considered to be 'culture values', and who therefore usurp the leadership of a 'culture community'."

Weber: Nation and State

- **Common Political Destiny**
 - People with same language, same ethnicity, same culture can form different Nations due to political reasons.
- “A nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own”
- “A nation is a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own”

E. H. Carr on Nationalism

- There are **three phases** of nationalism
- First phase: Dissolution of the unity of church and state and emergence of the sovereign as the identity of the people
- Second phase: From the 1800 to 1914. Balance between “nationalism” and “Internationalism”
- Third phase: Catastrophic growth of nationalism and collapse of internationalism.

E. H. Carr: 19th Century Nationalism

- Political power was coalescing into **national territories**
- Economic power was becoming national but economic system was international: emergence of a truly global economy
- **Rousseau** rejected the identification of nation with sovereign and said that the people are the nation; people are the only sovereign
 - Fundamental principle of American and French Revolutions
- National interests were not the personal interests, ambitions and emotions of the monarch/ruler, but the common interests, ambitions and emotions of the collective people.
- 19th Century saw the “**democratisation of nationalism**”
 - Assertion of the political claims of the middle class
- “The idea of the personality and character of the nation acquired a profound psychological significance. Writers thought and argued about nations exactly as if they were sublimated individuals”.

E. H. Carr: 20th Century Nationalism

- **Catastrophic!**
 - Three underlying causes
 1. Rise of **new social strata** to full membership of the nation
 - Extension of Franchise
 - Universal Compulsory Education
 - Political consciousness of workers and poor
 - Expansion in numbers and importance of urban populations
 2. Defence of wages and employment main national concern
 - Primary aim of national policy now was to address the welfare of the nation and help them earn a living with dignity.
 - Political power of masses directed towards improving their social and economic conditions
 3. **Popular control** over functions of State: Socialisation of the Nation
 - Workers now have practical interest in policy and power of the Nation.
- “Socialisation of the nation has as its natural corollary the nationalisation of socialism”

Hans Kohn: Definition of Nationalism

- Nationalism is a state of mind: communal psychology
- Nations are the great corporate personalities of history
- Nationalism is a consciousness which seeks to find expression for itself in the “highest form of organised activity: a sovereign state”.
- **Nations are ancient, Nationalism is modern.**
 - “With the advent of nationalism, the masses were no longer in the nation, but of the nation. They identified themselves with the nation, civilisation with the national civilisation, their life and survival with the life and survival of the nationality”.



Hans Kohn: Western Nationalism

- “Western World”: England, France, Netherlands, Switzerland, United States and British Dominions
- Idea of state is political
- Political State and its rights preceded emergence of nationalism
- Nationalism not dependent on culture or language
- New society which was largely secularised; importance of individual rights
- **Civic Nationalism** based on constitution, republic and rights of its citizens



Hans Kohn: Eastern Nationalism

- “Central, Eastern Europe, and Asia”
- Emerged as protest against existing state structures
- Eastern Nationalists did not have social base
 - Spent all their energy in propaganda and education
- Nationalism emerged in contexts where “Western” ideas were seen as “alien”
 - National culture was seen as bulwark against “alien” “Western”
 - “Inferiority complex” led to over-emphasis on past
- Eastern Nationalism substituted legal, rational concept of ‘citizenship’ for the infinitely vaguer concept of ‘folk’
- Used myths of the past and dreams of the future to create ideal nation which was expected to become reality sometime in the future
- Ethnic, Folk Nationalism

