Nationalism
Why is Nationalism Important?

- One of the most powerful mobilizing forces over the last two centuries
- Strongly influenced the American & French Revolutions
- Directed political developments throughout Europe during the 19th century
  - Revolutions of 1848
  - German and Italian unification
- Catalyst for World War I & World War II
  - Assassination of Franz Ferdinand by Serb Nationalists, 1914
  - Rise of the Nazi Party in Germany, 1930s
- Resurgent nationalism contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe’s communist block in 1989
- Continues to be a guiding force in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine, Israel… throughout the world
Key Debates within Nationalist Study

- How do we define the term “nation” and “nationalism”? 

- When did “nations” first appear?

- How have nations and nationalism developed over time?

- Do nations and nationalism develop “naturally”? 
Central Concepts

• Nation
  – A form of identity that competes with other forms of collective identity—religion, ethnicity, class, gender, race, regional, etc
  – National identity can also coexist with other forms of collective identity

• Nationalism
  – Ideology/doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty
  – Entailing fraternity within a single historic homeland, legal equality among all members, and a singular shared public culture
  – Collectively equated “authentic identity”
Modern Origins of Nationalism

- Ideology and discourse prevalent in North America and Europe in the late 18th century & throughout the 19th century

- Key dates/events:
  - Late 18th Century rise of Romanticism
    - Jean-Jacques Rousseau
    - Johann Gottfried Herder
  - 1775—The First Partition of Poland
  - 1776—The American Declaration of Independence
  - 1789—The French Revolution
  - 1804/1815—Serbian Insurrections
  - 1807—Fichte’s *Addresses to the German Nation*
  - 1829—Greek Independence
  - 1830—Serbian *de facto* Independence
Modern Origins of Nationalism

• Key Dates/Events (cont):
  – 1848—Revolutions of 1848
    • “Spring of Nations”
    • “Springtime of People”
  – c.1870—Italian Risorgimento (unification)
    • Began in 1815 following the Congress of Berlin and conclude c. 1871 following the Franco-Prussian War
    • Massimo D'Azeglio famously said: ‘we have made Italy, now we have to make the Italians’
  – 1871—German Unification
  – 1878—Serbian *de facto* Independence
  – Nationalist movements spread around the globe
Johann Gottlieb Fichte
"To the German Nation" (1806)

• “The first, original, and truly natural boundaries of states are beyond doubt their internal boundaries. Those who speak the same language are joined to each other by a multitude of invisible bonds by nature herself, long before any human art begins; they understand each other and have the power of continuing to make themselves understood more and more clearly; they belong together and are by nature one and an inseparable whole. Such a whole, if it wishes to absorb and mingle with itself any other people of different descent and language, cannot do so without itself becoming confused, in the beginning at any rate, and violently disturbing the even progress of its culture.”
19th Century Nationalism in Europe

- Why is it important?
- 19th century events set precedent for the emergence of subsequent nationalist movements throughout the world
- 19th century ideology of “common language, common history, common homeland, and common heritage/cultural traditions” established as dominant model throughout most of the twentieth century
- Rise of nationalism in the 19th century led to the transformation of absolutism into the mass national state
What is a nation?

- “A soul, a spiritual principle…” Renan

- “A historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.” Stalin

- “A nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own.” Weber

- “A large group of persons linked by such complementary habits and facilities of communication” Deutsch
What is a nation?

• A group of people sharing “assumed blood ties, race, language, region, religion, custom”
  Gertz

• “A nation only exists when a state has a unified administrative reach over the territory over which its sovereignty is claimed.”
  Giddens

• “A psychological bond that joins a people and differentiates it from all other people…”
  Connor
Nation or Ethnic Group?

- **Nation**
  - Latin verb *nasci*—to be born
  - Latin *nationem*—breed or race
  - 17th century used to describe inhabitants of a country regardless of ethnicity

- **Ethnic**
  - Greek noun *ethnos*—nation by common descent
  - “ethnic group” refers to common cultural tradition and sense of identity as a subgroup within a larger society
What is a State?

☐ An ancient institution dating back to ancient Greece and Rome
☐ Others insist on the unique features of the modern age, with its extensive rule of law, citizenship rights, and broad economic and social responsibilities
☐ A state is more than a government. Governments change, but states endure
☐ The means of rule over a defined or "sovereign" territory, comprised of an executive, a bureaucracy, courts and other institutions. But, above all, a state levies taxes and operates a military and police force. States distribute and re-distribute resources and wealth, as individuals and groups seek to influence or even to get hold of the levers of state power
☐ States exist in a variety of forms
What is a Nation State?

- Territorial-political unit (a state) whose borders coincide or nearly coincide with the territorial distribution of a national group.

- A nation-state is a state, or country, that has defined borders and territory. It is additionally a country in which a nation of principally the same type of people exists, organized by either race or cultural background. In the nation-state, generally, everyone would speak the same language, probably practice the same or similar types of religion, and share a set of cultural, “national,” values.
Nations without States…

• This can lead to the idea that there should be ‘one nation; one culture’

• The power of nationalism has resulted in a world of nation-states

• However, not all nations have states (e.g. the Kurds, Basques, Palestinians)
When did nations first appear?

ANDERSON, GELLNER, HOBSBAWM & SMITH

A SCHOLARY DEBATE...
Primordialism, Perennialism, Modernism

• Nationalists argue that nations are timeless phenomena. When man climbed out of the primordial slime, he immediately set about creating nations.

• Perennialists argue that nations have been around for a very long time, though they take different shapes at different points in history.

• Modernists, the most prevalent at the moment, see nations as entirely modern and constructed.
Benedict Anderson – ‘Imagined Communities’

- Anderson sees nations and nationalism as products of the modern world.
- He points out that despite their relatively recent origins nations like to see themselves as having ancient origins.
- For Anderson nations are best thought of as ‘imagined communities’.
- What is imagined is a form of social solidarity – a horizontal comradeship of citizens.
The members of a nation will never know each other or have face-to-face contact.

But each is confident that others throughout the nation share similar experiences: read the same newspapers, celebrate the same national holidays, watch the same television programmes, share a common culture etc.

In this way the members of a nation imagine themselves to be members of a community.

These sorts of communities started to emerge in late C18th.
For Anderson, the rise of capitalism and the inclusion of the masses into politics were important for the development of nations.

In addition, the emergence of print languages was also important as they enabled the construction of mass reading publics, crucial if the nation was to ‘imagine’ itself.

Furthermore, the decline of religion was also important. Anderson believes nationalism and religion have important cultural similarities: a link to death and immortality, for example. People are willing to die for their country.
Ernest Gellner

• For Gellner nations are the product of modernization and economic development
• Pre-modern societies are overtaken by a ‘tidal wave’ of modernity which disrupts both previous forms of social organization and belief systems
• Different groups are hit at different speeds creating new interest groups in society
Particular groups (e.g. intelligentsia, proletariat) are engaged in struggles against traditional elites and/or colonial powers.

Nationalism can generate a powerful form of collective organization: mass mobilization; social inclusion; promise of self-determination.

Once formed, a nation-state works of homogenize the nation through the dissemination of national culture (holidays, monuments, public rituals), and education.
According to Gellner, ‘nation-states extend their boundaries to the limits of their culture, and impose their culture within the boundaries of their power’

After the creation of the Italian nation-state in 1861 Massimo D'Azeglio famously said: ‘we have made Italy, now we have to make the Italians’

The ‘making’ of nations often involves the imposition of a ‘high culture’ in a top-down fashion
The Invention of Tradition

• Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983) draw attention to the way nationalists often invent traditions to give a sense of historical rootedness to nations
• A good example is that symbol of traditional Scottishness, the kilt
• The kilt was invented in C18th by an English industrialist to allow his Highland workers greater mobility while working
• The kilt is a product of the Industrial Revolution rather an ancient Scottish tradition
A.D. Smith – The Ethnic Origins of Nations

• Anthony Smith, formerly a student of Gellner’s, advances a very different account of nations and nationalism.
• For Smith the roots of nations are to found in pre-modern ethnic communities.
• Nationalism succeeds by discovering the ethnic past of the nation, an important source of myths and memories.
According to Smith an ethnic community has the following features:

– Shared collective name and common fate
– Shared history – this unites successive generations
– Shared culture, especially language and religion (creates sense of separateness from others)
– Association with specific territory
– Sense of solidarity which overrides class and other divisions
• The modern nation-state is different in that it incorporates citizenship rights, a unified economy, compact territory, and a single mass culture

• The nation is therefore an updated version of the earlier ethnic community
Conclusion

The extended debate between the ‘modernists’ (Anderson, Gellner, Hobsbawn) and ‘primordialists’ (Smith, Hutchinson) came to characterise the study of nationalism in the 1990s.

The debate has since moved on. New issues include the decoupling of nation and state and the emergence of post-nationalism (Delanty). Nevertheless, nationalism is still very important, indeed in some places it is very much on the rise.

According to some accounts, globalization has led to an increase in nationalist sentiment (rather than simply eroding the influence of the nation-state).
Globalization is also associated with the phenomenon of ‘long-distance nationalism’

Benedict Anderson writes, ‘electronic communications, combined with the huge migrations created by the present world-economic system, are creating a virulent new form of nationalism, which I call long-distance nationalism: a nationalism that no longer depends as it once did on territorial location in a home country. Some of the most vehement Sikh nationalists are Australians, Croatian nationalists, Canadians; Algerian nationalists, French … (continued)
Anderson continues, ‘… the internet, electronic banking and cheap international travel are allowing such people to have a powerful influence on the politics of their country of origin, even if they have no intention any longer of living there. This is one of the main ironic consequences of the processes popularly called globalization’

This is one of the topics we will look at next week
QUESTIONS…
References

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• Delanty, D. 2001: "Nationalism: Between Nation and State" in G. Ritzer and B. Smart (eds) *Handbook of Social Theory*
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