

# IS 101

Week 2: States and Nations

A word cloud featuring various terms, primarily social media platforms and news organizations. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with some appearing more prominently than others. The colors of the words range from light yellow to dark purple.

Words visible in the cloud include:

- twitter
- tiktok
- youtube
- instagram
- facebook
- reddit
- aggregation
- newsarticles
- friends
- guardian
- atlantic,
- podcast
- bbc
- cnn
- newyorktimes
- france24
- on
- stand.earth
- aggregatenewsapp
- joeroganpodcast
- google
- channel5
- globalnews
- dad
- apps
- tiktok,
- formerly
- articles
- grandmother
- jazeera
- decolonizemyself
- cgtn
- the
- daidsuzukifoundation
- greenpeacecanada
- persian
- washington
- ctv
- daily
- googlenews
- and
- wsj
- news
- aljazeera
- post
- 350
- bbc
- newyorktimes
- france24
- on
- podcast
- atlantic,
- guardian
- friends
- newsarticles
- aggregation
- reddit
- facebook
- daily
- ctv
- washington
- greenpeacecanada
- persian
- the
- daidsuzukifoundation
- cgtn
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- grandmother
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- tiktok,
- formerly
- aggregatenewsapp
- joeroganpodcast
- google
- channel5
- globalnews

# Tutorial questions

1. (a) Try and describe the main argument in the Calhoun reading. (b) The principle of national self-determination is a key element of the international system. According to Taub, a commitment to this principle increases the likelihood of conflict and violence. Why does she think this? Do you agree or disagree?

(In-class thought exercise) Each person in your group should fill in the blanks in this sentence. Explain your sentence. Explain your choices. Each other member of your group should note what part of your answer made your answer make sense to them and which part was not familiar. "I am a national of ..... I know this because ..... I know this because ..... I feel like a national of this country because if something bad happens in something bad happens in the country I am/am not (choose one option) more upset than I would be if the same would be if the same thing happened in another country. This makes sense to me because ....."

# Recap:

- hidden histories (and their relationship to power) affects how we view the world and relations between countries. This is because some perspectives are more visible than others.

Example: visible history: the idea of the nation and modern sovereignty can be traced back to 1648 and the peace of Westphalia.

Hidden histories: see map on next slide. What does this tell us?

- The starting point of a story also affects the way we think of that story. This is also a concept that is discussed by academics as being the way the beginnings of the nation are imagined.

List of countries and the dates that they got independence from the UK (or the British Empire as it was called back then).



# What is a nation?

\*how would you have normally searched for the answer to this question?



what is a nation



All



Books



Images



Videos



News



More

Tools

About 4,130,000,000 results (0.57 seconds)

## Dictionary

Definitions from [Oxford Languages](#) · [Learn more](#)



# na·tion

*noun*

a large body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular country or territory.

"the world's leading industrialized nations"

**Similar:**

country

state

land

sovereign state

nation state

kingdom

empire



- a North American Indian people or confederation of peoples.

What is the  
“hidden  
story” behind  
this seemingly  
simple  
definition of a  
nation?

In order to answer this question, we will consider the example of language. The definition tells us that a nation shares a language, but is that always the case?

The idea that a national language is shared, is constant and has always been that way is a myth. It is an imagined reality.

Examples set 1: Google the “national language” or the “official language” of Brazil and Peru.

Examples set 2: Google the “official language” or the “national language” of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

\*we will now move to the summary that was sent out and cover this in detail. Please take notes on this for the next section.



# Different ways of thinking about nationalism.

- 1. Nationalism is used by elites to gain or maintain control.** It is therefore tied to forms of oppression or conflict. These scholars see nationalism as a problem to be overcome.
- 2. Nationalism is necessary** to get people to work productive together. It is linked to processes like industrialization (you need people to work in the factories, to send their children to work in the factories and this need for labour produces institutions like the school etc. that teach the value of hard work and working from 9 to 5 to make productive factory workers. In other words, these scholars see nationalism as a tool that develops modern systems and institutions.)
- 3. Nationalism as connected to ethnic inheritance.** There is an identity you are born with that forms the basis for the nation.
- 4. Nationalism as a new cultural creation (a collective community “imagined” into existence.** Much like the discussion in (2) this form of scholarship argues that the creation of nationalism served a particular purpose.

# Characteristics of the nation. Are these always true?

- **This idea has a political purpose.** If you are one people/one nation, you can justify being ruled by one government. The legitimacy of the power of the government, comes from the idea of the nation.
- 
- **The idea of the nation is maintained by political power, but also through everyday practices like national celebrations and holidays.**
- 
- **A nation is usually (but not always) associated with a territory.**

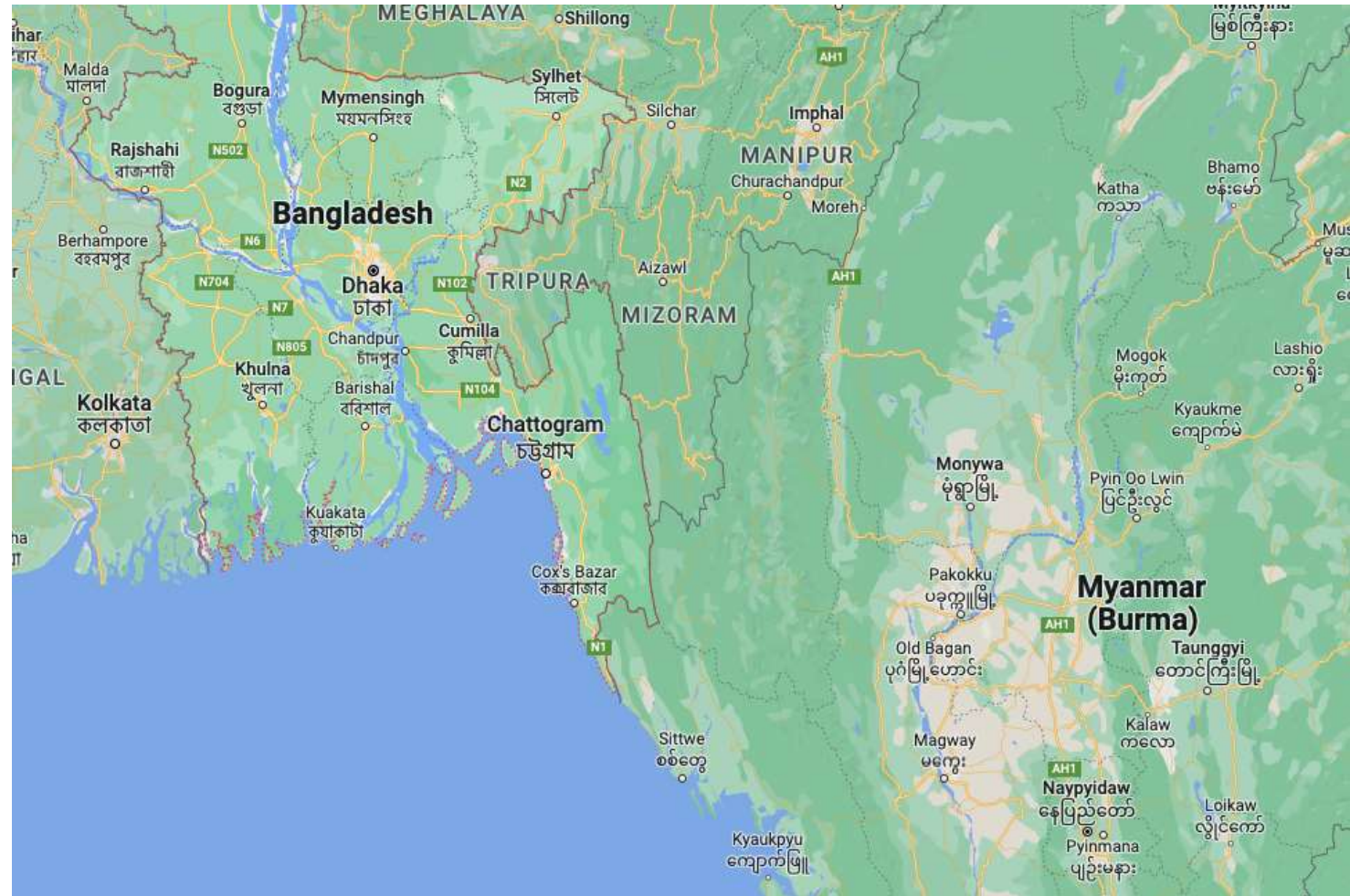
We are going to be using the term “legacy of colonialism a lot in the course.” What is a legacy of colonialism that affects nations today?

Where did nationalism come from?

Is it a western construct?

# English language map (not authoritative)







What is national self determination?





*Rohingya refugees help each other after crossing the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Mohammad Ponir Hossain/Reuters*

## **Summary**

- For decades, Rohingya, an ethnic Muslim minority group, in Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country, have faced institutionalized discrimination, such as exclusionary citizenship laws.
- The Myanmar government launched a military campaign in 2017 that forced seven hundred thousand Rohingya to flee. Rights groups suspect the government has committed genocide against the Rohingya, but officials deny the accusations.
- The United States and other countries have sanctioned military officials and given aid to Rohingya refugees who have fled to nearby countries, such as Bangladesh.



# From the reading by Taub (1)

## **Who Is In, and Who Is Out**

At times of stress from factors like war, major political changes or economic collapse, competition over who is entitled to national self-determination can trigger extreme violence.

Stefan Wolff, a political scientist at the University of Birmingham in England who studies ethnic conflict, has found that many of the world's worst conflicts have arisen when ethnic and political borders do not line up with one another. "From Kosovo to Silesia," he wrote in a 2004 article, "the competing claims of distinct ethnic groups to self-determination have been the most prominent sources of conflicts within and across state boundaries."

When states collapse or state borders are withdrawn, he has found, that creates an opportunity for groups to establish their claims to national self-determination. And when multiple groups lay claim to nationhood within the same territory, "ethnic cleansing" can come to seem like a grim but effective solution, a way to make ethnic and national borders line up by forcing out members of competing groups.

# From the reading by Taub (2)

## **The Rohingya: Deemed Foreigners**

In Myanmar, the Rohingya have long been demonized as outsiders in their own country. They have been present in Myanmar since the 12th century, according to Human Rights Watch. But excluding them from the nation, and later even from legal citizenship, has long been a political tool, part of the process of defining the nation by deeming some outside it.

After British rule ended in Myanmar — then Burma — in 1948, the new government argued that the Rohingya were illegal migrants from British-administered India, now Bangladesh, not truly part of the new nation. A 1982 citizenship law effectively stripped many Rohingya of citizenship, deeming them foreigners in their own country.

In 2015, the government disenfranchised the Rohingya en masse, preventing hundreds of thousands from voting in national elections. And in recent years, politicians, including the democratically elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, have implied that they were terrorists who threaten the nation.

The hidden story: nations do not necessarily share anything.

So then how are they still a thing? Why are they talked about in newspapers and books? Why are people willing to lay down their lives for them?

This is where your readings are useful. We will now turn to a section of the summary you were provided with last week.

What perspective do you think is the most believable? (think about the answer to this question as you listen to this section of the lecture)

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2. **Nationalism is necessary to get people to work productive together.** It is linked to processes like industrialization (you need people to work in the factories, to send their children to work in the factories and this need for labour produces institutions like the school etc. that teach the value of hard work and working from 9 to 5 to make productive factory workers. In other words, these scholars see nationalism as a tool that develops modern systems and institutions.)
3. **Nationalism as connected to ethnic inheritance.** There is an identity you are born with that forms the basis for the nation.
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# IMAGINED COMMUNITIES BENEDICT ANDERSON

So if nations are imagined and they do not share anything, does that mean that the nation does not exist?

No. It is brought forth (brought into existence) through institutions.

**From your reading:** The nation does invent new identities, but just because it invents them, does not mean they are false.



And what is the state that they are all fighting over? This excerpt (below) is from Michael Mann's classic work on the subject.

However, we will use the simplified definition I discussed in class which focused on the form of the state and its control over rules and force in its territory.

## Defining the State

The state is undeniably a messy concept. The main problem is that most definitions contain two different levels of analysis, the 'institutional' and the 'functional'. That is, the state can be defined in terms of what it looks like, institutionally, or what it does, its functions. Predominant is a mixed, but largely institutional, view put forward originally by Weber. In this the state contains four main elements, being:

- 1 a *differentiated* set of institutions and personnel, embodying
- 2 *centrality*, in the sense that political relations radiate outwards from a centre to cover a
- 3 *territorially demarcated area*, over which it exercises
- 4 a monopoly of *authoritative binding rule-making*, backed up by a monopoly of the means of physical violence.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from the last phrase which tends to equate the state with military force (see below), I will follow this definition. It is still something of a mixed bag. It contains a predominant institutional element: states can be recognized by the central location of their differentiated institutions. Yet it also contains a 'functional' element: the essence of the state's functions is a monopoly of binding rule-making. Nevertheless, my principal