

Assignment 2 – JY Roig

~~This assignment will discuss three papers which discuss nationalism.~~ Nationalism is a phenomenon which goes hand in hand with the nation-state. Storm in his paper discusses various theories for the origin of nationalism, focusing primarily on the modernist theory. The modernization theory attributes the creation of nationalism to modernity and the circumstances around the time period, such as language standardization, the rise of secularization and the printing press.¹ This perspective places nationalism as something almost coincidental, placing leaders and actors without self-agency. This lack of agency has been addressed in the field by focusing on role of culture.² However, the section discusses culture as serving to reinforce the nation-state, not create it. This is due to the focus on cold nationalism instead of hot nationalism.² As noted, more research needs to be done into this particular subject.³ The rigidity of nation-states is also discussed and its impact on both history and the social sciences.⁴ The base assumption of clear delineations between borders runs the risk of failing when analyzing individuals who acted as mediators⁵. It can also lead historians to overlook the relation of empires with their colonies and how interactions helped form nation-states.⁶

Steinmetz analyzes the evolutions of political history, with three main paradigm shifts. The first section is the evolution of historians towards the study of culture.⁷ Steinmetz does what Storm does not, he compares very clearly academic developments in different countries. However, the paper would have been stronger if he discussed more

¹ (Storm 2018, 115)

² (Storm 2018, 118)

³ (Storm 2018, 119)

⁴ (Storm 2018, 120)

⁵ (Berger 2003, 170)

⁶ (Storm 2018, 123)

⁷ (Steinmetz and Haupt 2013, 12)

precisely how these traditions interacted with each other. Steinmetz very aptly provides critique of one approach to explain the shift into another, the shift of culture towards linguistics was due to the constructionist approach provided by the cultural perspective. The linguistic turn allowed a whole new perspective which included the colonies perspective, particularly regarding self-definition and provided self-agency to oppressed groups.⁸ The constructivist approach provides a lens towards gender, its construction and interaction with daily life. The discipline also saw the challenge of deterministic theories regarding national characteristics. The final shift in perspective is an increased focus on spatial and visual aspect. This section of the paper discusses the Biefield approach, to which Steinmetz belongs to. It's worth pointing out that the structure of paper works to justify the Biefield approach and does not discuss other shifts in the field.

The Vaugh text takes a radically different approach to the perspective of nation-states, choosing to focus mostly on the evolution of the concept of culture. This focus on conceptual evolution adheres to the approaches of the Biefield school which problematize the components that feed into the nation-state.⁹ This text is also particular in the way it incorporates the influence of contemporary events on theory development, with instances such as colonialism and race theory.¹⁰ Academics do not exist in a bubble and theories are influenced by and influence the world around them. The focus on the concept of culture also permits for the exploration of recent developments in the field regarding the culture of subjugated people.

⁸ (Steinmetz and Haupt 2013, 14)

⁹ (Steinmetz and Haupt 2013, 21)

¹⁰ (Vaughan 2011, 233)

A critique that is worth pointing out for both the Storm and Steinmetz texts is their focus on the construction of the nation-state. However early efforts of elements in the left wing of the political spectrum rejected the concept of the nation-state but did indeed believe in struggles of nations, as seen in the writing of Bakunin and Poland.¹¹ The issue of Poland and Bakunin's support exemplifies the construction of a people, nationalism without the goal of a state.

Sources

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¹¹ See (Bakunin [n.d] 1896) and (Bakunin [1847] 1971)

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