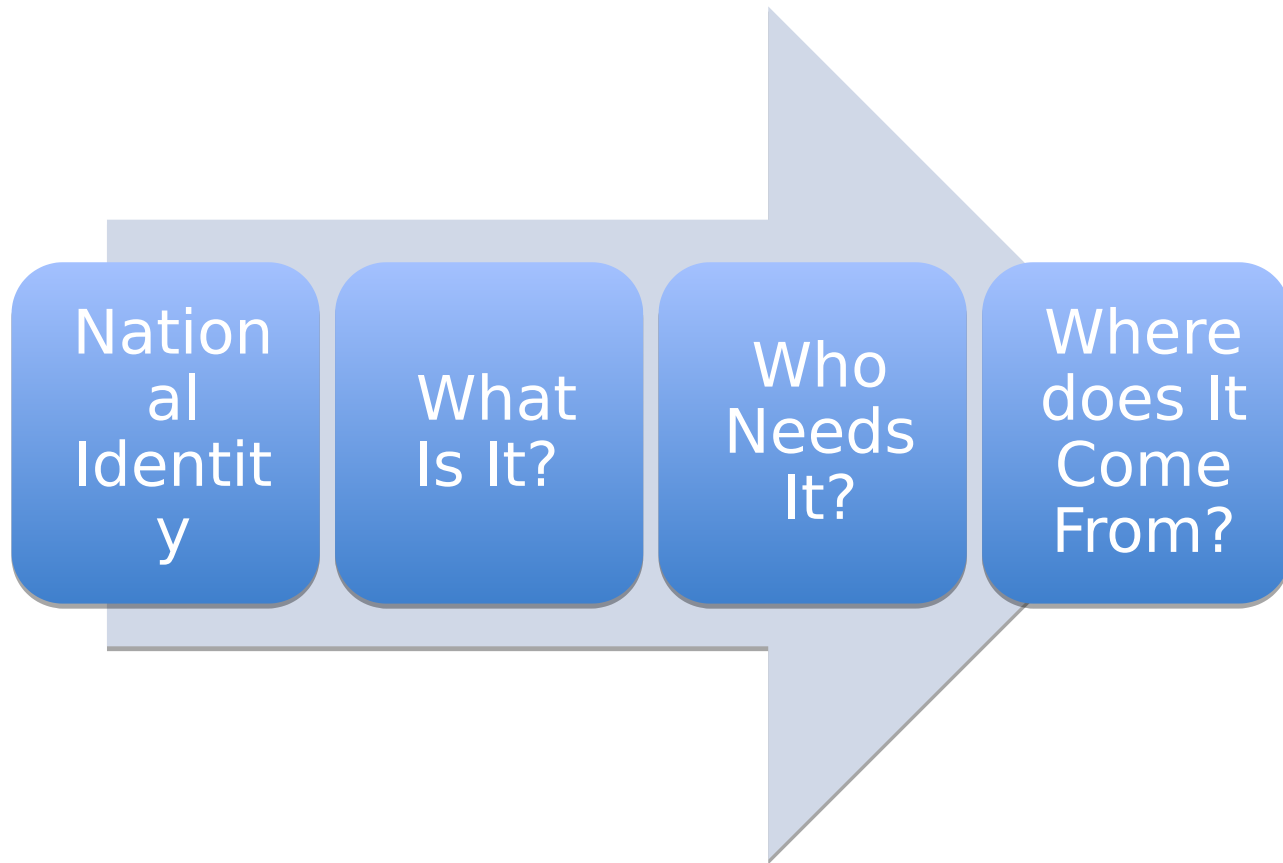


National Identity and Manas





- Nationalism is the magical power that convinces a group of people:
- A) that they have a binding and compelling interest in each other despite everything that potentially separates them.

and

- B) that this interest is best nurtured and preserved in a political system (ideally a state) that protects and serves that interest.

Two Basic Kinds of National Identity

- Civic/individualistic
 - A) I choose my nation and belong to it as an individual
 - B) Primarily based on political belonging.
“All people who agree to follow the laws of a given state are members of the nation.”
 - C) US , Canada, Australia, etc.

- Ethnic/Collectivistic

- A) I am a member of the nation because I belong to a group that constitutes one of the nations in a state.
- B) Although in principle I can choose my identity (not all ethno-national collectives allow this), the everyday requirements for entry are stiffer. I must speak a certain language, follow certain customs, adhere to a certain religion in a certain way, or even share the “blood” of my co-nationals.
- C) Tends to be more exclusionary than Civic version.

Ethno-Nationalism Based on What?

- In principle can be based on anything, but the most generally used markers of identity are common language, religion, ethnicity, culture in many possible combinations.
- Since it is not possible to know all the other members of “your nation” and since each of us has our own idea of language, religion, culture, etc., national identity is not natural.

Imagined Community

- As perhaps the most famous scholar of nationalism wrote, the nation is “an imagined community.”
- Members of the community agree to identify with people they don't know on the basis of traits they believe they share, although in practice they have no way of verifying that belief (eg, it is impossible to talk to all fellow nationals and be sure that they all have the same thing in mind when they are thinking about the national group).

Does Everyone have a National Identity?

- You have, of course, many potential identities. Let's think of some.
- But despite all these identities, currently in the world it is almost a foregone conclusion that everyone is supposed to also identify with one nation or another.
- This was not always the case.

Pre-modern States Were not National

- There have been states for a long time.
- In most of the world and for most of history, states were amorphous entities. They did not have firm borders, central authorities did not exert much control.
- Local leaders agreed to follow larger-scale leaders not on the basis of national connections but for pragmatic reasons.
- Normal people had no way to imagine other members of their potential national community because most never left their homes and had little idea of what “others” were like.

Pre-Modern State like a Protection Racket

- For the most part, leaders of pre-modern states did not care what their subjects thought, ate, spoke or worshipped.
- They cared that they paid taxes and did not make trouble.
- And as long as subjects' taxes were not too high, they did not care who their nominal ruler was, as they paid their taxes to local intermediaries who themselves transferred some money to the center or performed some service for it in exchange for security.

States and Leaders

- States created around charismatic leaders. They could convince people to follow them because a) following seemed worth it financially or b) not following was too dangerous.
- But few followed or did not follow because of ethno-national ties.
- Leaders tried to create more durable states based on ties (usually of kinship) but these tended to be fragile and fall apart after death of charismatic leader.
- Case of Central Asia

States become National

- In the modern world (starting from end of the 18th century), this began to change.
- For various reasons, debated heavily by scholars, homogeneity of population became increasingly important.
- Chicken and egg problem. Does modernity need homogeneity, or does increasing homogeneity

- Either way, in the modern world, almost everyone lives in a state and almost every state is constituted as a nation state.
- That is, the state exists to advance the interests of the nation, no matter how that nation is defined.
- As such, it is in actual or potential competition with other states.
- Case of Ukraine today.

Ideal World of a Modern Nationalist

- All members of the nation live in one state
- No members of any other nation live in the state
- That is, on this view the territory of nation and state should be perfectly congruent (eg, all Kyrgyz live in Kyrgyzstan and no one else does).

- But this begs the question, how do we know who is a member of the nation and, therefore, who should be able to live in the state?
- Remember, national identity not a given, it needs to be imagined and it can be imagined in various ways by various people.
- World history of the past 200 years can be seen as the increasing “nationalization” of people. That is, they are encouraged to think of themselves in national terms and they actually do so.

Examples from the Balkans

- Overall, this is an elite driven project. Normal people probably do not care what state they live in or what nation they could belong to.
- Elites very much care because they can lead people, but only if people agree to be led. And getting them to agree on a nationalist basis works.

Nation vs. Class

- Agreement to identify on the basis of national identity goes against Marxist belief that people should identify with class more easily than nation.
- Marxists thought, for example, that it should be obvious that German and Russian peasants should identify more with each other than with ruling classes. This turned out to be wrong.

How are Nations Made?

- Elites choose national contours on basis of likely possibilities.
- Divide into us and them
- Hardest part, paradoxically, is to create “us.”
- Example of creating a language.
- This process can be done either before or after there is a political state for the supposed nation. “Peasants into Frenchmen” vs. “We have Italy now we must make Italians.”

- Variety of tools available for nation creation.
- “Invented traditions”
- Actual traditions carefully chosen
- Language
- Literature

Strange case of USSR

- As Marxist state, should have been supranational.
- Yet, for various reasons, was the most active creator of nations in world history.
- “National in form, socialist in content”

Central Asia

- Various ways to imagine nations in CA. Soviets chose to build 5 separate nations but important to realize that other choices could have been made
- Pan-Islam
- Pan-Turkic vs. Persian
- Settled people vs. nomads

Manas and the Making of Kyrgyz

- As noted in my first lecture, 19th-century versions of Manas do not appear to identify him firmly as Kyrgyz.
- Rather, he is clearly a Turkic-speaking warlord, willing to accept ethnic others with no difficulty as long as they are loyal to him personally (Almanbet, Kanykei) and willing to kill or humiliate Turkic speakers if they are not loyal.
- That is, he is a typical pre-modern ruler.

Soviet Manas

- This does not work for Soviets. They have a Kyrgyz Autonomous Region (later Republic) and they need it to have a national culture.
- Manas becomes the potential cultural glue
- Conflict between “nationalism” and “chauvinism” in the USSR makes situation complex.
- Still, Manas becomes firmly connected to Kyrgyzzness, even as other possible attributes of identity (language, customs, music, etc.) disappear.

Manas in Independent KG

- New state after 1991 needs something to hold it together.
- Demographics of KG in early 1990s
- Akaev's post-Soviet Soviet project
- Failure of this project by 1995, turn to Kyrgyz nationalism
- Manas 2000 years.
- Situation today.