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# **THEORIES AND PRACTICES OF NATIONALISM**

## **TERM PAPER(MID-1)**

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## NATIONALISM

Nationalism is a range of political, social, and economic systems characterized by promoting the interests of a particular nation, particularly with the aim of gaining and maintaining self governance, or full sovereignty, over the group's homeland <sup>1</sup>. The political ideology therefore holds that a nation should govern itself, free from outside interference and is linked to the idea that the individual's loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests.

## JOSEPH STALIN

According to Stalin a nation is a stable, meaningful conglomeration of people who have a set attributes or necessities in common. But having ideas or interests common doesn't make them a nation. Thus, a nation is primarily a community of people of diverse races and tribes who have in common, a language, rich cultural history and a common territorial boundary. All these, according to Stalin are a necessary condition for a nation but lacking anyone of it will result in an unstable nation.

First, the language which is the medium of exchange of ideas among people of a nation, should be unique. An example of Austria and Russia by the author, that both of them are not stated as nations due to lack of a common language. Thus a common linguistic medium is necessary for a community to be recognized as a nation. But two nations having the same national language need not be the same nations. For example, The England and The US.

Thus, Territorial boundary plays another major role in determining the identity and characteristics of a nation. It is a general tendency that with generations passing on there is a bond that is formed with the land we live and we express our love to our

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<sup>1</sup> [wikipedi.org](http://wikipedi.org)

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motherland. In India, we say, "Bharat mata" comparing our nation to a mother. Such a relation to a nation is a key factor in forming a nationalist ideology. In fact the empires built by great kings collapsed after a certain time and have been abolished completely now. The reason is that, however large the empire was, however strong the army of the nation was, it was just a union of various small territories captured by a king( who is not sure to be their ruler in the future), that differed in culture, language and many other aspects. The author refers to the United States where he says that all the states in the nation are bound by economic dependence and not due to their cultural or lingual practices. Such nations are unstable unless they are economically highly stable as there is no sense of nationality among them towards their nation. In Georgia, with the fall of feudalism and economic growth, they were bound together even later which kept them as a stable nation.

The national heritage and cultural richness also defines a nation. It passes from generations to the next ones and gets instilled into them. In India, the cultural and religious practices such as celebrating a festivals have been in practise since ages. Thus, the people in a nation develop feeling of togetherness based on cultural practices too.

Thus a nation can be formed with a common territorial boundary and economic dependence but will not be stable unless it's strength(economy) is very powerful.

In case of India, the author's ideas of nationalism is not certain as in India, we have a large range of languages, people from different religion or culture and the economy of the country is not as strong as the US. But, even after 60 years of independence, the nation is still stable. This can be related to our culture and traditions, the independence the nation gives its citizens. Though there is a lot of agitation and inflation in the country we do have a gratitude towards our motherland that has been inherited from our ancestors.

**MAX WEBER**

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Weber's idea of nationalism is completely opposite to that of Stalin and other authors. He is against the norm of the nationalist ideas of a common language and territory and economy. According to Weber, it is the historical experiences and sentiments of citizens that arouse the feelings of nationality among people. The aspects of common language, common territory only boost the spirit of nationalism and thus are secondary elements. The author refers to Austria, Russia and Prussia which are all different nations but have a common language. It is the cultural practices and historical experiences that instill the idea of nationalism. The concept of nation in itself and nation for itself, meaning that the formation of a nation can be subject to two situations, getting divided from a community and becoming a nation of its own, and other is to form a nation from underlying values and culture, common language etc. In the first case where a nation is formed by division from another nation, that is economically backward, then the elite class will be the ruling class and should guide the nation. The other case is that people form a community and feel a solidarity towards each other thus forming a nation out of themselves. There is a transition from nation in itself to nation for itself and this occurs through the sentiment of citizens that they belong to the nation and the nation is theirs. It is the transition from this nation in itself to nation for itself that the elite classes play a major role and all the factors such as common language, culture etc are important to boost the nature of people in the nation. The elite class who steer the masses hold a prestige of power. This is in terms of nation and not power literally. It means that they continually keep reminding the masses the feeling of national solidarity, to the new generations which will assure the stability of a nation. But he states that only the sentiments and unity will not form a nation, there exist peculiarities in every nation and those define the nation as it is. They are the cause of masses having a feeling of unity. It may vary basing on the situation of the nation and also in terms of intensity. For example, the Muslims in India may support Pakistan, a Muslim majority nation while those Muslims in the Indian army will be bound to India. Same is the case with the Tamilians in Tamil Nadu and in Sri Lanka. Thus every citizen in a nation has his own

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feelings and reasons for nationality and the states never lose this opportunity to use these rational feelings to enrich the feeling among them.

According to weber, the unification should fail in India, since the factors such as common language, unity through land are all secondary. As explained it fails in case of India , which is diverse in its religion,culture and language. It is formed after the rule of british by getting separated from them, but the country itself was divided into parts because of the empires that were established earlier by kings. But the Indian nation is stable till date.

## **ERNEST GELLNER**

Nationalisation is something which has evolved over a period of time. It is not just a revival of the old culture. At the same time it is not completely ignored also. It is a modified version of the old culture and also an improved one.It is believed that this concept of national was initiated by the europeans. This is not true,This would have evolved even if the Europeans had not come up with the idea. Nationalism is a formation of specific states with a similar culture. Each state has its own political and social setup. These states are formed over a period of time after going through variations and modifications. Nationalism is usually born out as the result of a revolt of oppression from a ruling party/kingdom.

After concept of nationalism evolved and states were formed, not just the higher class but peasants also contributed to the nation politically and socially. The nation constituted not only the educated higher classes but also the poor peasants. The boundary of each nation extends to cover all those areas which have a common culture and all such units are politically united. In this process of nationalism, there is a merging and mixing of many dialects, cultures and governing and during the process some of these are also discarded.

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Once the nation is formed it needs an economical and political status of its own. To develop that, Education is a fundamental requirement and should be accepting modernization.

The concept of basic literacy is possible only with an educational system which is widespread throughout the nation. But the medium of communication, the language plays a major role in establishing and handling a such a vast educational system. Thus standardizing a particular language is essential .

According to the author, conditions of nationalism are:1)every man is a clerk.2)They are not horizontally mobile\*. It means that every citizen of a nation must have literacy and should be productive. And that he cannot migrate from one working area to another due to language restriction. It is a contradiction of nationalist idea of uniting the nation.

Cultural homogenization is an important aspect in bringing a nation together.

According to Gellner nationalism is not the product of rational ideas but it is the result of objective reasons.

Initially the Indian peninsula consisted of several small kingdoms ruled by the respective kings. Each region had a different dynasty. There were frequent wars between the smaller rulers.After a few years, the Britishers took control of the entire Nation which included the present countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh.The Country was exploited by them during the period and finally the Indians revolted and fought for their freedom. Thus our country has gone through many changes and finally evolved into the country as we know it today. During the process there were a lot of changes politically, culturally and socially . However, the ancient customs and traditions are still being followed albeit with a lot of variation. Gellner's ideas are true to almost every nation. He gives a general perspective and not relating to India certainly

**ERIC HOBSBAWM**

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According to Hobsbawm, the credit for creating the concept of nations and nationalism should be given to historians. The nations as they are today were very different from what they were. They have developed over a period of time and it is a long process. The nations evolve from the traditions and culture of the people of a particular territory. There have been a lot of changes in the boundaries of the nation and even in the languages spoken. In the earlier years, only the aristocratic families had the privilege of schooling and the language used was very formal. This has now changed. The general masses are also receiving education and the languages used now are more informal. The formation of various states has led to changes in the social and political scene. Consequently the economy has also affected. Now, the citizens of the nation including the general public and not just the bureaucrats and aristocrats are involved in the governing of the state. In order to bring about a feeling of belonging to the citizens, three new traditions have been introduced - imparting education to all, building of monuments and social celebrations. In this aspect, France deviated a little. The governance in France came to be called the Third Republic. Most of the monuments built depicted democracy in a certain way. France did not use many depictions from its history since there were many struggles connected to it. In contrast Germany depended more on its history.

India is also a developing country. The country was very different before Independence and prior to that it consisted of many small kingdoms ruled by kings until the Britishers occupied it. It is true that in India, to arouse a feeling of nationalism for freedom, many leaders used the above three factors. To pay respect to our leaders many statues and monuments were built after independence. Only with education, we can gather people on a large scale and propagate ideas. All these instances can be related to Indian nationalism and its growth. Today it is a single nation with 22 recognised languages. It has evolved into the largest democracy in the world.

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Thus, no theories explained above describes a nation perfectly. The theories of Joseph Stalin and Eric Hobsbawm put together can explain the formation of Indian nation to a great level. In terms of a common language, territory and homogeneous social culture, it is true that in India, people have a feeling of togetherness. And this is strengthened by such factors. Also the theories of Gellner explain the formation of India after independence only to a certain level . In terms of Eric Hobsbawm, it is true as explained above that education, social celebrations and a rich cultural heritage helped India to stay together as one united nation and setting an example to the whole world.



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