

# Theories and Practices of Nationalism - Assignment 1

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**Question:** *How are nations like communities? Is there is a difference between the communities which are formed by civic and ethnic nationalisms?*

*(Write an essay (800-1200 words) explaining your answer. Draw on examples of at least two nations and nationalisms other than India.)*

## Introduction

Most widely-accepted notions of nations today have a common grounding in considering them to be *communities* of people: from Stalin and Seton-Watson's definitions to Benedict Anderson's. But the manner of these people "coming together", as it were, also differs from one nation to another. The *conception* of a nation as formed by a particular people affects how the final "community" is. We attempt to explore both the community nature of nations, and how said nature changes with the ideological imagination of it.

## How are Nations Like Communities?

### Communities as a horizontal brotherhood

To understand the community aspect, we look at Benedict Anderson's proposed 'working definition' of a nation as an "imagined political community, imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". Why does he define the nation in terms of community? It is observed in the modern nation that most people with nothing in common with each other - language, ethnicity, political affiliation - who may never even meet, consider themselves to be connected in some way due to sharing a nationality by chance of birth. Despite whatever inequality exists, the nation is still conceived as a horizontal 'brotherhood', a comradeship among equals. People go to war, potentially sacrificing themselves for their 'brothers and sisters' of the community, that they will likely never meet. It has some markings of a community, but it is not the traditional *Gemeinschaft* <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Anderson, B. R. O. G. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso. Pages 5-7

## Nation in the framework of Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft

This begs comparison to the traditional imagining of a community. As discussed in the lecture, the key components of a Gemeinschaft are:

- social order based on *personal ties* (of 1000 or so at maximum)
- custom and tradition as the moral code
- family (birth) as the guiding force for social status and economic roles
- fulfillment at the cost of individual movement.

None of these apply to any nation of millions that for all intents and purposes seems more aligned with Gessellschaft instead. But on closer examination, this too does not match. *There is a distinction between the nation and its call for a sovereign state*; social contract and mutual consent is shared among the citizens and the state but not with the ‘Nation’ itself. So what is this community? Ernest Gellner argues that “it (nationalism) *invents* nations where they do not exist”, taking pains to establish the ‘falsity’ of this community <sup>2</sup>. Anderson opts to call it an ‘imagined’ community instead, noting that his peer’s statement implies the existence of ‘true’ communities of the scale to be juxtaposed to nations, and also that all communities larger than primordial villages with face-to-face contact are, in fact, imagined <sup>3</sup>.

## A short correspondence between nationalism and religion

On that note, a good comparison to align the perspective of national community to is the imagined community of religion. The community of strangers of the same religious faith is driven by their common faith, the sacred (and equidistant) language, a common ‘fraternity’. It provides an ideological perspective similar to that of nationalism, only the latter is in fact “intellectually poorer”. We need only look at Kohn’s words in *The Nature of Nationalism*

... man’s loyalty was due to his church or religion; a *heretic* put himself out of the pale of society in the same way that a “*traitor*” to *his nation* does today. <sup>4</sup>

TODO add more

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<sup>2</sup>Gellner, E. (1964). Thought and change P. 169. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson. <http://archive.org/details/thoughtchange0000gell> Emphasis added

<sup>3</sup>Anderson, B. R. O. G. (1991). Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. London: Verso. Pages 5-7

<sup>4</sup>Kohn, H. (1939). The Nature of Nationalism. The American Political Science Review, 33(6), 1001–1021. JSTOR. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1948728> Emphasis added

## Is there a difference between the communities which are formed by civic and ethnic nationalism?

There is a difference. It isn't black-and-white. Most sovereign nations today <sup>5</sup> appear to have some form of civic basis in their constitutions and laws for naturalized citizenship - mentioning, in some cases, the migrating individual's national status too. Some founded on civic principles have shown ethno-nationalist sentiments of late (eg: USA). But a difference still exists for ethnically-*imagined* nations, be it in their incorporation as by constitution (think Israel), or in the popular imagination of the residents (consider India).

A quick demonstration of why popular Indian imagination is ethnic - consider how the population deifies the achievements of non-citizens with any degree of Indian descent as an Indian achievement, despite the individual's own national alignment which may not match this imagination. TODO Refactor

### Theoretical differences distinguishing the two

Why should there be a difference?

There are differences in the inspiration for each type of nationalism. Hans Kohn talked of "western" (civic) and "eastern" (ethnic) nationalisms <sup>6</sup>, and the motivations for each highlights the difference in the imagination that forms aforementioned imagined communities.

**Civic nationalism** is based on principles of individual rights. The State precedes the nation - the nation here is no clarion call for sovereignty against an 'other', but rather a *structure that aids the exploration of individual liberty*. Kohn examines this ideation through John Milton in Puritan England:

With him nationalism... was the affirmation of individual freedom from authority, the self-assertion of personality *in face of its own government or church*, ... Liberty to Milton was religious, political, and personal. <sup>7</sup>

The nation is manifestation of a code, not a people. The community, others with like-minded interests. At least in its conception, there is no ethnic limitation imposed. Anyone with aligned goals can join the nation and further it.

**Ethnic nationalism**, on the other hand, "emerges as protests against existing social structure". It's a call for sovereignty from an oppressor. The community rallied around the cause of sovereignty can have arbitrary commonality, but necessarily including a supposed shared history, a 'glorious past' where the

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<sup>5</sup>TODO footnote on nations being civic

<sup>6</sup>Kohn, H. (1965). Nationalism its Meaning and History. Revised Edition Princeton, NJ.

<sup>7</sup>Kohn, H. (1965). Nationalism its Meaning and History P. 16-17. Revised Edition Princeton, NJ.

community once was and must strive to return to. This community is limited to those falling under the purview of this purported shared history.

## **Imaginations of ethnic nationalism in China, Israel, and more**

- Israel is the classic example. The Jewish nation, it has (apart from traditional marriage etc. This is constitutional recognition
  - Citizenship conferred based on solely Jewish ethnicity (with bg checks)
  - Recognition of Ethnicity as Jewish, Arabic, etc. not Israeli
  - “people of the land” can be Israeli
  - There is a naturalization policy.
- More monoethnic: China and Hans:
  - There’s the ethnic consideration of non-chinese citizens as chinese (the economist) Imagination at play here
  - Citizenship is hard. There is rules, which allows for residents with a purpose but no chinese ethnic connect to become citizens, but only 1kish people are naturalized.
  - Ethnic “pureness” of the Han as “purely chinese”. Elimination of the Uighurs as an example. This is, again, imagination of the nation not aligned.
- Some other random ones: Bhutan with the 30 year residency, Kuwait with the religious requirement.

## **Imaginations of the “civic” nations**

- Will consider the UK, as that’s what Kohn talks about in his book:
  - Englishman’s quest for liberty
  - Milton’s dream
  - Messianic expectation, “new israel”
  - In practice, esp. colonialism, not so civic
  - Naturalisation

## **Points**

- How are nations like Communities (Benedict Anderson):
  - Conceived as horizontal
  - Conception of a connect, even if most will never meet
  - Not exactly Gemeinschaft. There’s millions, not thousands. There is individual movement, and family does not define social status, economic role, etc. We’re still in Society, but we imagine there is a connection between random people we will never meet, cannot possibly ever meet, because we’re born within the same arbitrary plot of land. Sometimes not even that.

– Kohn - people consider themselves to be “of” a place, as opposed to “in” a place

- Answer: yes.
- First, what I mean by ethnic and civic. Using the definition of “by the constitution” and “by the ethnic nature”, aka a limitation on religion, etc. Why? Because of countries like India, that would fall under “ethnic nationalism” as per Kohn, but is (still) Civic Nationalism in practice.

Noting here that most nations seem to have some sort of naturalization process, but that does not always translate, like in China, hence these will be considered Ethnic.

Basically, I’m not considering here the origin, but the current status of it, how it is considered.

- However, I will be using the original definitions by Kohn to motivate why civic and ethnic nationalisms are different.
- “Western nationalism” As Kohn calls it arises from the Englishman’s need to have liberty. England, the first “new nation”, Nationalism from the religious matrix, the self consideration of “new Israel”. John Milton:

With him nationalism was not a struggle for collective independence from an “alien yoke”; it was the affirmation of individual freedom from authority, the self-assertion of personality in face of its own government or church, “the deliverance of man from the yoke of slavery and superstition.” Liberty to Milton was religious, political, and personal.

It is founded in a common principle of “liberty” and some unexplained belief that the nation is the ultimate source for the protection of these liberties. There is belief in a code here, the nation is a vessel. The belief is in the written law which is to serve a greater good, and not ethnicity. Not from an outward perspective, anyway.

- Ethnic nationalism, on the other hand, is primarily externally motivated - a protest against an existing social structure. It is expanded by propaganda and education (however: France did this too!). And it relies on the image of an “ideal future” based on a non-existent “golden past”

Random thoughts

- “Western nationalism” As Kohn calls it arises from the Englishman’s need to have liberty. England, the first “new nation”, Nationalism from the religious matrix, the self consideration of “new Israel”. John Milton:
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- India is a nation due to the political partition by the British?
- Civic nationalism: Follow the Constitution and you're a national
- Ethnic nationalism: Be something
- Israel allows citizenship by return, descent, naturalization, etc. Exclusionary policy, and many have termed it as such, and UN creation marked it as "Jewish State". It also allows for nationals from the lands.
- Also, all Jewish people (as defined) can be Jewish nationals easily.
- Kuwaiti law requires one to be muslim. But there are no other restrictions on ethnicity per se.
- Bhutan has a strict citizenship law, immigration is based on parents/long servitude.
- There is an ethnic bleed into the Civic nationalisms
  - WASPs in America, the idea of immigrants not being American, especially if not white.
  - All nations seem to have a constitution allowing for naturalization
- There is a difference of sorts between communities of civic nationalism and communities of ethnic nationalism. Kinda. Now, most modern states have a constitution, but some are significantly more ethnic than others, while some display characteristics of wanting to be ethnic nationalist but are strictly civic till date
  - But america for example is a split community. Half want ethnic considerations? Does "white" count? It's a request for elimination of other ethnicities from the state. Others abide by the civic model.
- Han Chinese want to be more ethnic? Elimination of non-Han
- China considers all Hans to be chinese.

865 at the start.