

# Theories and Practices of Nationalism Term Paper

Will nationalism survive globalisation? Or will globalisation, in its current information technology mediated version, lead to the fading away of nationalism and nation-states?

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## Abstract

Something something summary of paper

## Introduction

- There is an interesting dichotomy between the “globalisation is dead” messages and the “globalised society is the future” crowd. Which is the case?
- We are more specifically looking to see if and how it would impact the existence of Nationalism and the nation-state.
- For understanding globalisation we rely heavily on [Scholte \(2005\)](#), and we compare it against the various theories taught in class. Special emphasis will be given to the theory of the minimal self-reproducing unit required to sustain a community, introduced by [Gellner \(1983\)](#)<sup>1</sup>

## Globalisation is not dead; What even is it?

- To make a case, we need to know what globalisation is in the first place.

## What globalisation is not

- Searching for Globalisation, we are met with a flood of articles announcing that it is dead – most, from the financial fields. Hence you have [Saval \(2017\)](#) writing on the “fall” of Globalisation due to (then) recently elected world-leaders opting for “nation first” approaches, or Michael O’ Sullivan calling for a “new [multipolar] world order” ([2019](#)).
- These operate under an understanding of “globalisation” as a synonym for “internationalisation.” Such a definition is not beneficial to begin with<sup>2</sup> due to the redundancy. It also reduces globalisation to the limits of internationalisation, which by definition conceives the idea of nations as the primary political unit.
- Another common thread is to align it with liberalisation – removing official border constraints on international trade and the like – making globalisation about the spread of contemporary neoliberal macroeconomic policies.<sup>3</sup> The usual arguments about invalidity due to reduction apply, but this is important because as a policy implementation of ‘globalisation’ for a majority of corporations and many countries, it is common to assume *neoliberalist globalisation* to be the

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<sup>1</sup>More specifically, Gellner specified the need for a community to sustain an independent educational system if it hoped to sustain itself in modern society (see [Gellner 1983, 32](#)). We will explore this later.

<sup>2</sup>See ([Scholte 2005, 52–54](#)), on how definitions should try to “advance knowledge,” and why the new word should not be expressible as a synonym for another existing concept.

<sup>3</sup>([Scholte 2005, 56](#)). As the book says, “large-scale globalization and widespread economic liberalization have frequently transpired concurrently in the past quarter-century ... it is quite something else to conflate the two concepts, so that globalization and liberalization become the same thing.”

only one available, and thus (the authors comment that) most opponents to to ‘globalisation’ are often just opposed to *neoliberalist globalisation*.

- Globalisation as Universalisation, and globalisation as Westernisation are the following two TODO write later

## Globalisation as a shift in social space

- For definition, we primarily use the proposal put forth by [Scholte \(2005\)](#) - globalisation as a shift in the social space, expressed through the spread of transplanetary and supraterritorial connections between people.
- Spatiality: operating now on Planet Earth, and not as a nation, or a village, or a community. This is a bold claim, and we’re trying to justify why we claim that the social space has in fact shifted so much
- Transplanetary relations: by no means new, but definitely higher numbers due to cheap air travel. More social relations, more economics, more diseases, etc. Which is great, but it doesn’t take us all the way there to a “shift” as described previously. Which is where supraterritoriality comes in.
- This is where communication comes in big: also the telephone, but especially the internet. Supraterritorial:

As the word suggests, ‘supraterritorial’ relations are social connections that substantially transcend territorial geography. They are relatively delinked from territory, that is, spatial domains that are mapped on the land surface of the earth, plus any adjoining waters and air spheres.<sup>4</sup>

Fast worldwide travel. Shared currencies, and exchange rates. Ecological changes affecting everyone. Global sports events. Events in Wuhan changing planetary history. Imagination of a common ‘humanity’ that gets emphasised whenever even private agencies like SpaceX send people to the ISS.

- Essentially: globalisation is a paradigm shift in many ways. Will it stand the test against nationalism?

## Why do people herald the death of the nation-state?

- Given this rudimentary understanding of globalisation, we are yet to examine exactly why it has been heralded as the successor to the ideology of nationalism. We look at that now.
- For some context, we should be aware that the bulk of the work surveyed was in the 90s/early 2000s, in the heyday of global optimism.

## A Paradigm Shift

- The conditions that allowed globalisation as a viable ideology – better communication and transport across vast distances – was a paradigm shift in how people perceived the world. One might imagine instantaneous communication akin to the printing press,<sup>5</sup> a revolution in communication – the way the latter was the herald of print capitalism. And not just telephonic or internet network-based communications: broadcast radio and television, global brands in peoples’ day-to-day lives, and the ability to travel the world in under a day all brought about an awareness of

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<sup>4</sup>(see [Scholte 2005, 61](#))

<sup>5</sup>It is true that telephonic conversation was a thing since the late nineteenth century, but as Scholte noted in his chapter “Globalization in History,” early phone and telegraph systems were slow, unreliable, and very expensive – as such, unavailable to a vast majority of even the ‘civilised’ world.

‘global consciousness’ to the masses, something that was a hundred years ago “generally limited to fleeting perceptions in limited élite circles.”<sup>6</sup> Globalisation – when not perceived as Internationalisation – allows people to imagine themselves as global citizens in a discourse dominated by nation, be a “man without his shadow” sans the ostracization.<sup>7</sup>

## Democratization of the Internet, if only for a brief moment

- A key factor played by the internet here is in its access to a bilateral information flow – and in earlier days, the general democratic nature<sup>8</sup> of it.
- Previously with radio and television, information flow was centralised. Sure, people could talk to each other on the phone in a rudimentary peer-to-peer “network,” but it did not match the scale the government, or ad company, or media group had. This is something we consider central to Gellner’s theory of community self-reproduction: when the nation controls the information, even with democratic checks and balances the propaganda required to sustain the state can come through unfettered and unchallenged. With the internet as an open-to-all forum, the means of publishing was decentralised (if only for a short while).<sup>9</sup>
- Chat rooms and USENETs/Forums gave people the ability to talk to a lot of people they did not know, unlike with telephones where at least some knowledge of the other person was a prerequisite. Access to a global state of sorts, in line with the respatialization mentioned earlier.
- This is not entirely the case now. Private corporations based in the United States provide much of the services we use on the internet today, and users are bound to adhere to the rules set in place by them – sometimes in good faith, sometimes not. China monitors their entire population of a billion and some more.
- Even under corporate control, there is still dissemination of information from more than just one side. It is only under censorship – which does happen – that groups are unable to share their opinions, and so far these are mostly bypassable censors by individual companies. As for States trying to control the content on the internet, well, as (Conversi 2012, 13) puts it:

Attempts to control the web over ideological content and ethnic dissent can occur only at the price of curtailing fundamental human rights.

- Gellner called nationalism “inherently weak,” requiring constant propaganda to keep up the nationalist sentiment. A democratic mass communication system seems to be, at first glance, at odds with that. But Gellner’s statement was on the influence of a particular nation, and not nationalism the concept as a whole. The democratization of the internet did change *some things* with regards to nations, but it was never realistically competing against the ideology as a whole.

## Misc.

- Scholte said that State remains, character shifts. Sometimes it isn’t the only mode of governance any more, some times not even the principal one. Continuity theorists claim otherwise. Theoretically, a global company by its refusal to engage in business in a country, can influence to

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<sup>6</sup>(see Scholte 2005, 116)

<sup>7</sup>(Gellner 1983, 6) spoke of how it is near-impossible for someone to imagine themselves nation-less: statelessness is still imaginable, if not viable, but to be without a nation would be like a man without a shadow (his interpretation of a book by Chamisso, a French immigrant in Germany).

<sup>8</sup>Now, a case can be made to claim that the early internet was *anarchist*, not democratic. The point here is that it was not controlled by centralised State governments, or private firms.

<sup>9</sup>It is worth clarifying that “mass communication” was limited to people capable of getting on the internet in some capacity, which – without the ample support of governments and corporations, is a rather small number limited primarily to enthusiasts and academics. So while it is one thing to wax and wane about the “death of the free and democratic internet,” it was never a democratic system in the first place if only a small “elite” could access it – and the unfettered universal reach of the netizen-journalist was limited to this group.

an extent the laws and regulations of the business. However as China showed, this may not be true with Chinese divisions of major global companies with different rulebooks popping up due to internal competition. However however, it *is* China so universal applicability may vary.

- [Bamyeh \(2000\)](#) makes some bold claims in his book, “The Ends of Globalisation,” speaking of the inherent totalitarianism of nations<sup>10</sup> and the inevitability of globalisation. His analysis is pre-9/11 and slightly dated for the reason – not anticipating the infusion of purpose the attacks would give the American people a year later, he claims the nation is “purposeless,” assigning vague enmity to sporadic terrorist groups in a drought of rivals in the post-Cold War period. In a review of his work [Podobnik \(2006\)](#) mentions that his discussion on the likely trajectory of global capitalism is “somewhat problematic” – that capital had not in fact, contrary to claims, managed to reacquire autonomy from political regulation, as evidenced by post 9/11.

## Comparing against Nationalism

- Over class, we have discussed many ways to analyse why Nationalism is as strong as it is. So now, we will apply the same lenses of analysis to Globalisation as well. TODO write more

## Anderson’s Imagined Community

Anderson’s theory of imagined community ([Anderson 2006](#)) has had far-reaching impact on the study of nation-states and nationalism. The idea itself is simple – any community larger than a village of a few hundred is imagined; with a nation this number is somehow scaled up a few orders of magnitudes to tens, hundreds, and thousands of millions. Most of these people will never meet each other, and there will be a lot of difference in class, creed, and so on; but the nation is still conceived as a horizontal community, with its citizens willing to die for the abstract concept of this nation and the imagined brotherhood among those that live in it. In a sense, Anderson notes, it is more like religion than a strongly formed political ideology (like Marxism). This allows the nation and its nationalists to look past the various paradoxes nationalism brings with it.

A key feature of nationalism is that the community is restricted – the existence of nationals implies the existence of non-nationals, and at no point is there (most of the time) a desire to expand so far as to conquer the entire world under the banner of “India,” for instance. Wars are primarily fought over resources and not land, when they are fought.

In order to compete with nationalism, globalisation will have to somehow attain an imagined community encompassing the entirety of the planet’s human life, while attaining similar levels of political power. To that extent, it is worth looking at some of the mechanics Anderson described as tools of nationalist propaganda: (border-contained) shared journeys and print capitalism. For globalisation to succeed in overtaking nationalism as the most significant ideology of our times, we will have to examine newer mechanisms that perform similarly.

**Global communication networks** is the print capitalism of the modern age. Like print capitalism bringing about a change in the imagination of a shared space and common and free time among those residing within a nation, the existence of global networks of communication – either peer-to-peer or as large groups, but primarily the latter – enables the imagination of the planet as a shared common space of human beings, rather than a collective of nations engaging in diplomacy. This is absolutely crucial for the respatialization defined earlier as the need for understanding the new framework of globalisation, and is the closest equivalent there is to print capitalism, by Anderson’s theories.

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<sup>10</sup>[Bamyeh \(2000\)](#) says, “In an age of nation-states, everyone wanted to hear the good news that nationalism and totalitarianism could be disentangled from each other. Only a few had the bad manners to try to spoil the feast by pointing out the obvious, namely, that the preconditions of totalitarianism ... for example, singled out—the transformation of classes into masses, the elimination of all group solidarity, a pervasive sense of individual loneliness—are conducive just as well to national mobilization.”

Where the parallels fall of however are with regards to (border-contained) shared journeys. First of all, they cannot be border-contained if the goal is to have a global shared journey. Most commonly known shared journeys shared by people across the world are either religious – such as pilgrimages like the Hajj – or national, such as moving to the United States from a third-world country for better prospects and living out “The American Dream.” There is no explicit non-religious equivalent of this shared journey with globalisation.

Some might make a case for “**shared experiences**” that the benefits of global broadcast bring to us all – such as watching man on the moon in the 60s, the four-yearly cycle of tuning in to the Olympics, millions of people across the world watching a K-Pop band premiere their music video on youtube. These are all valid, and online communities do spring up on the basis of such shared interests, but none of these are of the type that can replace the imagined community of nation – at least, not yet.

Finally, to come back to global communication networks, it is true that they help the imagination of the ‘global community’ – but they are also employed by nationalist forces. We shall come back to it in a later section, but it is a theme that will persist through the rest of the subheadings.

## Kohn’s Replacement for Religion

The similarity of Nationalism to Religion wasn’t noticed just by Anderson – Kohn spoke extensively on the matter. Quoting him,

... 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>11</sup>

In fact, one of the key downsides of earlier philosophically rich global ideologies like Marxism and Liberalism had been that, steeped in reason, they failed to answer the question of purpose. Why are we here? It is a question that cannot be attempted scientifically, as there is no observation that can be made. Marxism and Liberalism could go on about dialectics and rights, but only the Church provided an answer to purpose – at least until nationalism. The ideology of a community of brotherhood, a higher cause to look forward to (the benefit of the nation), attachment to an abstract concept that was supposedly ancient, just lost to the sands of time.

It is this ‘completeness’ that allowed nationalism to eventually hold strong and retain its place while the other ideologies either disappeared, or reformed themselves under its wing. Now we must question if globalisation could hold up to the same standards of spiritual completeness.

But globalisation is not a religious doctrine; it does not demand allegiance or piety to a God or a Nation equivalent. At best, one can assume the purpose of ‘furthering mankind,’ but all beyond is personal speculation. Globalisation does not seem up to the task of non-rational attachment.

## Gellner’s Nationalism precedes Nations

### Hobsbawm’s Invented Tradition

### Gellner’s Literate High Culture

### Likening to the “Colonial Indian Elite”

## Information-mediated Nationalism

## Outline

- Introduction

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<sup>11</sup>(see [Kohn 1939](#))

- Globalisation is not dead
  - Even though some economic arguments claim is
  - Define it, and give examples where you agree (5 definitions, cases against or for each in brief)
  - General agreement with the book, and mention how *this will all factor in*
  - Overall: summarise the book. 600 words.
- Why would people herald the death of the nation-state?
  - There's the whole globalisation OP not-fad respatialization thing. Global village, Economic liberation, yada yada.
  - Globalisation != Internationalisation, does not necessitate nations.
  - The internet eased communication in unreal, unexpected fashion. Two-way communication. State seemingly does not control this dimension. Most arguments were from earlier.
  - Gellner did say Nationalism was a weak force, a well tended garden
  - Scholte says the State remains, but its character shifts. Possible over-appeasement (but perhaps not to democratic globalisation)?
  - Bamyeh. Will get to responses to him later.
- Looking at history of nationalism, comparing against globalisation and viability:
  - Anderson's Imagined Community: No other
  - Kohn's Replacement for God: No cause
  - Gellner's Nationalism came first (so I don't forget: in Gellner's chicken and egg problem, the egg came first)
  - Hobsbawm's Invented Tradition: Maybe but how?
  - (Maybe) De-universalisation of literate high culture (in new shape)?
  - (Maybe) Alike to the "Colonial Indian Elite?" Football idea.
- How information-mediation may actually help nationalism:
  - Already exists a long-distance nationalism (Anderson)
  - Becomes worse with the internet (Eriksen, Conversi)
- Also other theories, that I cannot back as strongly, leaning towards...
  - Not viable due to violation of Gellner's nationalist sentiment in global economy, and also the other way with global social respatialization
  - Nations as emotional conduits to rouse support for state governance
  - Most people do not move, and Facebook is a social bubble. Weak, but in need of a Gandhian figure.
  - What is key is control over devices of reproduction: schooling and mass communication. The government controls, but corporations...
  - Pobodnik mentions that capital has not managed to reacquire autonomy from political regulation, but especially with tech sector being new ground, lots of gaps showing up in the national framework (methodological territorialism from Scholte). The new East India Company.
  - Globalisation would require policy implementation, but those in charge of education either favour national interests (government) or neoliberal interests (corporations). No framework for reproduction.
  - Statelessness as an example, unable to continue without a framework of reproduction and trampled effectively by the advent of communication and fast, convenient travel.

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