

# Lecture 4

## Context and Definition

# Nationalism studies debate

- questions accompanying the definition of the terms ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’
- attempts to identify the historical point when nations first emerged
- how did nations and nationalism develop and how and why they are a part of our existence

# Nationalism and ethnicity

- Debate about the origins and character of ‘the nation’
- Nation: ancient or modern?
- Are nations real or constructed?
- ‘Do nations have navels?’

# Constructionist / anti-constructionist divide

- Primordialist or perennialist / modernist accounts
- Each of these views is internally differentiated and encompasses a range of positions
- Yet, fundamental differences in their theoretical understanding of nations and nationalism

# Primordialists

- 18th century German romantic nationalists (e.g. Herder, Fichte, Humboldt)
- nations are one of the natural divisions of the human race (God's will)
- differences stemming from old and deeply rooted ethnic, religious and/or linguistic distinctions
- sociobiology

# Perennialists

- the roots of modern nations are generated by pre-existing affiliations
- nations seen as perennial (lasting a long time, constantly recurring) and immemorial

# Ethnicists

- accept the modernity of nationalism as ideology and a political movement
- ethnic communities and nations are related phenomena
- analysing the origins and genealogy of nations
- the need to study the process of nation-formation within and through a longer and more cyclical account of history

# Modernists

- approach which has become widely accepted over the last decades (“Everyone agrees that nations are historically formed constructs.” Brubaker)
- the nation seen as a purely modern phenomenon
- nations and nationalisms were constructed and generated by particular new historical circumstances and social and economic conditions, which occurred about two hundred years ago



# Are nations ancient or modern?

- the **modernists** see the nation as a purely modern phenomenon; it is a product of capitalism or industrialism and bureaucracy, an outcome of modernisation – *nationalism comes before nations*
- in opposition, the **primordialists** see nations as ‘forever there’ entities that have existed for centuries, if not for ever – *nations come before nationalism*
- somewhere in between stands the position of the **ethnicists**

# Nations and N are modern:

- nation “belongs exclusively to a particular, and historically recent, period. It is a social entity only insofar as it relates to a certain kind of modern territorial state, the ‘nation-state’, and it is pointless to discuss nation and nationality except insofar as both relate to it” (Hobsbawm)
- “nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism” (Gellner)
- emphasis on the congruence between cultural and political units (Gellner, Hobsbawm, Breuilly, Hechter...)
- states create ‘nation-ness’

# Not necessarily so ...

- ethno-symbolic approach (the ethnicists) argues that the modernists put too much emphasis on the modernity: they exaggerate the impact of industrialism, capitalism and bureaucracy on the modern state and nationalism
- the modernists fail to acknowledge the deep roots that nations have in ethnies, they do not see the earlier ethno-symbolic base of modern nations

# What matters

- “... when analysing sociopolitical situations, what ultimately matters is not *what is* but *what people believe is*. And a subconscious belief in the group’s separate origin and evolution is an important ingredient of national psychology” (Walker Connor)

# Theorising nationalism

- the modern study of nationalism began with Ernest Gellner in the mid-1960s
- most scholars (historians) agree that nationalism is a modern phenomenon:
- as an ideology and discourse N became prevalent in North America and Western Europe in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century

# What do nationalists want?

- nationalist doctrine has 3 main claims:
- nations are distinct and unique
- loyalty to the nation is more important than other interests and values
- the nation should have its own state

# Nationalism

- N is “an ideology which imagines the community in a particular way (as national), asserts the primacy of this collective identity over others, and seeks political power in its name, ideally ... in the form of a state for the nation” (Spencer & Wollman)

# Nationalism

- nationalism is above all a social and political movement; sociological view should not reduce nationalism only to politics
- Billig: ‘banal nationalism’ – everyday affirmation and perpetuation of national identity (cf. Bourdieu’s ‘habitus’, a set of social arrangements which have been internalised)
- one can understand nationalism as an organising political principle that requires national homogenisation and gives absolute priority to national values and ‘interests’ in aiming to achieve ‘national goals’



# Nationalism

- N has 3 dimensions (Calhoun):
  - N as discourse
  - N as project
  - N as evaluation
- 
- Next lecture: civic/ethnic N, nation-building

# Readings for next time:

- Craig Calhoun (1997) *Nationalism* pp. 86-92
- John Hutchinson “Cultural Nationalism and Moral Regeneration” in Hutchinson & Smith *Nationalism* (1994)
- Hans Kohn “Western and Eastern Nationalisms” in Hutchinson & Smith *Nationalism* (1994)
- Hugh Seton-Watson (1994): “Old and New Nations” in Hutchinson & Smith *Nationalism* (1994)
- Smith, Anthony (1995) *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* pp. 134-144
- Weber, Eugen (1976): *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France 1870-1914*