

Nation, Nationalism in Controversial Debates and Thought: A Review of Origin of Nation and Nationalism

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Received 2 March 2013; accepted 5 May 2013

Abstract

In sociological and anthropological view there is a challenge between the paradigms about nature, power and origin of nations and nationalism. The aim of this article is to discuss and describe the source of nations and nationalism. Here there are three main categories of explanation: the Primordialist or the perennialists, the modernist, and the ethno-symbolic. Primordialist and perennialists' emphasis is on nation and nationalism as a natural and biological phenomenon. Modernists think to nation and nationalism as new events. They determine nations as a 'constructed' or 'invented' phenomenon, but ethno symbolism criticizes modernism view of origin of nation and nationalism. Ethno-symbolism seeks to provide some conceptual tools as an alternative approach and research programme for the study of nations and nationalism.

Key words: Nation; Nationalism; Primordialist; Perennialists; Modernist; Ethno-symbolism; Common History; Myth; Symbols

Ata Anbarani (2013). Nation, Nationalism in Controversial Debates and Thought: A Review of Origin of Nation and Nationalism. *Canadian Social Science*, 9(3), 61-67. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/j.css.1923669720130903.2764> DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/j.css.1923669720130903.2764>.

INTRODUCTION

These days the world is divided by nation- states. In other words it is known as "inherently fragmentated space". Every nation-state identifies itself against others by

territorial and geographical aspect of life. Every person and every society belongs to a nation. The world is divided into the nations naturally, because nation is the only legitimate source of political power. Every society and nations carry some meanings and share several symbols because they need to have independency against others who live and belong to other societies and territories or nations (Triandayllidou, 2010). Ernest Gellner (1983) wrote "nations existing today had to fight to secure their survival and to achieve their independence. For most national communities, there have been and there probably still are significant others, other nations and/or state". The aim of every nation is distinguishing themselves against other nations. The sense of autonomy and unity is a necessary condition for every nation (Triandayllidou, 2010). Cultures are shaped in this space. It is vital for every human who live in a particular nation and territory for having a unit definition of self, society and nation.

Identity and culture are shaped in this realm in which "group of people use the system of shared meanings to interpret and make sense of the world, has traditionally been tied to the idea of a fixed territory" (Inda & Rosaldo, 2002, p 10). So territoriality is an organizing principle for social and cultural life (Waters, 1995, p.5).

NATION AND NATIONALISM IN DEFINITION

The concept of nationalism has been controversial during twenty century. At first it is necessary to define nation. There is a problem in defining nation because there is no mutual agreement between researchers about the relationship between nation and nationalism, nation and ethnicity and nation and state (Hutchinson & Smith, 2007, p 24).

Three classical definitions in the field of nation belong to Ernest Renan (1823-92), Joseph Stalin (1878-1953) and Max Weber (1864-1920). Ernest Renan, (1823-1892) French historian, theologian and linguist, believed that for

recognizing a nation we should investigate it as a spirit or spiritual basis. In his famous article "what is the nation", he mentioned that race, language, religion, common interests and geography can't define the base of nation. He argued nation as a kind of correlation which emanates in a daily plebiscite (Hutchinson & Smith, 2007, p.39-42).

Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) was the Premier of the Soviet Union, characterized some features for a nation. He didn't agree with those who define nation on one hand as pure races and tribes and on the other hand as emperor governments. He strongly believed a nation doesn't exist unless having combination of some elements such as economic life, language and territory (Hutchinson & Smith, 2007, p.43-46).

Max Weber (1864-1920) German sociologist and political economist, investigated nation as prestige community fruition with a kind of cultural commission. He claimed that nation can't be defined with a standard definition, but he related nation to common ancestor, myths and ethnic communities. Weber believed the fact that makes the nations as distinct, is undertaking a political program (Hutchinson & Smith, 2007, p.47-53).

Definition of nation in the view of Karl Wolfgang Deutsch (1912–1992) - a Czech social and political scientist- is as a functional approach in which nation is as a collection of common history, common experience and communications' facilities. He claims that the aim of national organizations is enforcement and spreading network communities which can guarantee the obedience of people from national norms and symbols (Hutchinson & Smith, 2007, p.53-58).

Clifford James Geertz (1926-2006) has an anthropology approach to investigate the nation. He believed that in post colonial states, there are two sections: ethnic and civil, in which ethnic approach is primordial loyalty that gives people separate identities, and in civil approach citizenship is a main feature of modern state (Hutchinson & Smith, 2007, p.59-64).

Anthony Giddens (1938) presents a governmental definition of nation in which he describes nation as a "Bordered power- container". In Giddens' formulation, what then emerged was the 'bordered power-container' that we know it as the modern nation-state which exists in a complex of other nation-states. It is a set of institutional forms of governance maintaining an administrative monopoly over a territory with demarcated boundaries (borders), and its rules are sanctioned by law and direct control of the means of internal and external violence. He also recognizes that there is no intrinsic link between nationalism and the doctrines of sovereignty (Spencer & Wollman, 2002, p.45). However this definition is criticized by some writers. Like Weber, they believe the root of nation is related to ancestry and kinship (Hutchinson & Smith, 2007, p.40).

The meaning of words such as nation, country, territory or state is really near to each other and they have

similar functions. These words mostly point to a territory under dependent and unitary ruler ship or residents of this territory or the government itself. Although concepts of nation and nationality have a lot in common with ethnic group and ethnicity, but nation and nationality have political meanings, because they somehow point to nation-state. Country points to specified geographical territory, whereas state is an official institution and legitimate organization. According to a definition nation is formed by common history, common culture, and unitary territory having recognized borders by other units, common languages and the most important one by the existence of state institution. The last element is an important feature without which other human groups can't be a nation (Ahmadi, 2009, p.81-86).

Nationalism means mobility of feelings and national sensation for homeland and catching political or national-economical goals. Nationalism can be different from patriotism because nationalism has a special political program but in patriotism there is not any political program (McLEAN, 1996, p.335). Today we can define nationalism in different ways. According to Smith "The term of nationalism has been used in several ways. It can signify:

- The whole process of forming and maintaining nations or nation-states
- A consciousness to belonging to a nation, together with sentiments and aspiration for its security and prosperity
- A language and symbolism of the 'nation' and its role
- An ideology, including a cultural doctrine of nations and the national will and prescriptions for the realization of national aspirations and the national will
- a social and political movement to achieve the goals of the nation and realize its national will" (Smith, 1991 A, p.72).

Furthermore, "Nationalism is a complex phenomenon and there are disagreements about how to define it but most definitions include the following:

- National consciousness or awareness of oneself as part of a group,
- National identity or identification with the group,
- Geographical identification or a geographical dimension to the group,
- Patriotism or love of the group, and
- Demands for action to enhance the group" (Sargent, 1999, p.25).

"The ultimate objective of nationalist movements is to make the nation and the state co-extensive" (Cameron, 1999, p.7) in which people ought to be united under a single government. They also should be liberated from foreign domination so that they can govern themselves (H.Birch, 1989, p.4). Any way the theory of nationalism emphasizes that humanity is naturally divided into nations which are known by certain characteristics which can be clarified, and the only legitimate type of government is national self-government (Elie, 1960, p.9).

"Unlike most other political doctrines, nationalism lacks a founding father whose ideas have served as inspiration and model for his successors. There is no nationalist equivalent of Liberalism's John Locke, conservatism's Edmund Burke, or communism's Karl Marx. But it is possible to trace the intellectual origins of nationalist doctrine in the reactions of several late-eighteenth century writers to the universalistic assumptions of the philosophers of the Enlightenment" (H.Birch, 1989, p.13).

In fact the age of Enlightenment had two heritages. The first one was republican government and the second one was universalism. The thinkers of enlightenment suggested that "republican forms of government were best for everyone and would be a blessing if adopted throughout the world" (H.Birch, 1989, p.13).

J.J. Rousseau (1712-1778) was the first political theorist who sketched a theory that can be called nationalist. He believed every society members should share common costumes. He suggested political societies should have their own institutions of government (H.Birch, 1989, p.14). After breaking down of old dynastic and religious authority, Rousseau saw the necessity of establishing the collective personality of the nation as the new center and support society and social order, so he concluded the true political community could be based only on the virtue of its citizens and their enthusiastic love of the fatherland. (Kohn, 1965, p.20-21). Rousseau believed that invention of an ideal political society is not a matter of natural evolution or spontaneous combination; rather it should be united by some common bonds of origin, interest or convention. (H.Birch, 1989, p.15).

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) had a historical view about the subject of nationalism. However he was influenced by common essence of humanity but he strongly believed tradition, custom and especially languages are the roots of cultural nationalism (Vincent, A, 1992:361). He discussed Language had extremely important value as the expression of Volk cultures (H.Birch, 1989, p.16-17). In the idea of Herder, the cause of continuing culture and custom is Language (Vincent, 1992, p.237). According to Kohn, nationalism, in the idea of Herder, was spiritual and moral concept and he deeply was convinced that true nationalism would promote the cause of peace (Kohn, 1965, p.103-104).

Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762 – 1814) followed Herder in maintaining that language was the most proper basis for nationhood. He believed separate language is the cause of separate nation. This nation can govern itself independently. Therefore, according to Fichte, the Germans had right to become a self-governing nation. Moreover German language was not any language to be given equal value with all the other tongues spoken in Europe and elsewhere. German language had special qualities that contributed to the special character of German culture. It was a pure and natural language

in compare with other languages such as the French, the Italian, the Spanish and the English. Briefly Fichte believed German language is the superior language among all languages and the spirit of nations is the language (H.Birch, 1989, p.19-20).

Fichte's immediate successor was Hegel (1770–1831). In the case of nationalism, Hegel observed national state as a form of political organization rather than a cultural one. He believed a state can improve the mankind which includes increasing the human freedom. In the idea of Hegel, state was a moral institution which could improve the nations (H.Birch, 1989). The state is a Divine Idea as it exists on the Earth. In a state, Freedom obtains objectivity, so Hegel believed that obeying law is the way in which humankind can be independent and so free. "When the state or our country constitutes a community of existence; when the subjective will of man submits to laws- the contradiction between Liberty and Necessity vanishes" (Kohn, 1965, p.111). After that Hegel emphasized on historical inevitability, in which the world spirit would be organized in national states. For example "Hegel believed Napoleonic Empire as just one more stage in human progress, to be replaced in turn by another and presumably more advanced stage" (H.Birch, 1989, p.21-22).

Mazzini (1805-1872), an Italian nationalist and patriot, attempted to stimulate the Italians into creating a united Italy. He emphasized on geography and historical traditions and mission of Italian nation to have a common country. He admired ancient history of Italy and after studying that he concluded:

"Italy therefore will be one. Her geographical conditions, language, and literature; the necessities of defense, and of political power; the desire of the populations, the democratic instincts innate in our people, the presentiment of a progress in which all the forces and faculties of the country must concur, the consciousness of an initiative in Europe, and of great things yet to be achieved by Italy for the world; all point to this aim. There is no obstacle in the way that may not be easily overcome, no objection that may not be historically and philosophically met and confuted" (Kohn, 1965, p.120-121).

According to Durkheim (1858 - 1917) - a French sociologist- a nation exists where the nationality and the state are one and the same (where political bonds and cultural unity are found together). He believed humankind is moral because he lives within established societies, and patriotism is exactly the ideas and feelings as a whole which bind the individual to a certain state. Also he didn't see any contradiction between loyalties to the nation and to humanity as a whole. In addition, Durkheim saw a straight relation between religion and nation. He pointed to the similarities between traditional religious celebrations and a reunion of citizens commemorating the promulgation of a new moral or legal system or some great event in national life (Spencer & Wollman, 2002, p.18-20).

Finally, it seems that according to thinkers of nationalism, the main features of nation or nationalism

is nation-state in which some elements are prominent such as common history, common language and culture, specific territory and geographical boundaries (Kohn, 1939). So a nation could be defined as a community that has some common features such as common economic life, common myth, common language, stable territory and finally the existence of nation state.

DIFFERENT CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF NATIONALISM

Some thinkers believe that nations are modern phenomena, so they know national Identity as a modern and artificial phenomenon. However some social scientists who belong to this approach like Hobsebowm believe that some countries such as Iran and China and Egypt are old nations. On the other hand some thinkers believe that the root of nations is old, and it is related to kinship and affinity and race. In this research the researcher believes that for having a suitable frame of national identity in Iran, investigating the theories related to origin of nation and nationalism is necessary.

It was previously said that there are two main ideas about beginning of nation and nationality. The first approach is Primordialist / perennialists and the other one is Modernist/ instrumentalist. The first group (Primordialist / perennialists) believes the origin of Ethnicity and Ethnic relations as the first conditions of humanity. According to this idea, governments, parties, bureaucracy and politics are the sign of ethnical and cultural identity gaps. The second group (Modernist/ instrumentalist) argue ethnicity and nationality as modern phenomenon which is produced by political elites. In the idea of Modernists, nations and nationalism is the product of modern state, bureaucracy, secularism and capitalism.

PRIMORDIALISM AND PERENNIALISM

Primordialism believes nation and nationalism are old phenomena and so they are natural and universal. For example Edward Shills (1910-1995) believed that kinship relationship is the base of nation. He knows the root of primary groups in Gemeinschaft (community) with strong features of Neighborhoods and families (Shills, 1957).

According to Clifford Geertz (1926-2006) the majority of nations are created based on blood, language, race and habitat, and this is the feature which makes the borders between self and the others. These kinds of relations make the base for state's power controlling. According to this theory nation is built based on ethnicity. Walker Connor (1926) believed Nationalism is loyalty to the nation not to the state. He believed Nation is a group that has consciously ethnic roots. Van Den Berghe (1933) that has social biological approach believed that the root of

national and ethnic identity is old feelings which are based on kinship process and genetic factors (Ahmadi, 2009, p.92-93). Another example of this approach is Franjo Tudjiman's monograph on Nationalism in Contemporary Europe:

"Nations...grow up in natural manner, in the objective and complex historical Process, as a result of the development of all those material and spiritual forces Which in a given area shape the national being of individual nations on the basis of blood, linguistic and cultural kinship, and the common vital interests and links of fate between the ethnic community and the common homeland and the common historical traditions and aims... Nations are the irreplaceable cells of the human community or of the whole of mankind's being. This fact cannot be disputed in any way" (Spencer & Wollman, 2002, p.27).

Generally primordialism points to the recurring nature of nationalism during human history. No longer claiming that nations are natural, perennialists claim to find major continuities in ancient and modern concepts of the nation across different historical periods and in very different places (Spencer & Wollman, 2002, p.27).

MODERNISTS/ INSTRUMENTALISTS

According to Modernists, nation and nationalism are modern phenomena. For example Anderson knows the origin of nation formation in "imagined communities" which are formed by annihilation of religious states, start of the new communicational methods and "print capitalism" in all over the world (Benedict Anderson, 2006,p.17-26). Anderson argued nation and nationalism are imagined because: "The members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communication" (Benedict Anderson, 2006,p.6) . Anderson believes nation-states are formed according to nationalism in the continent of America. Nationalism was invented by American colonial states because of the power of media. "According to Anderson, the media played a key role in how the nation was imagined historically. Nationalism developed out of revolution enabled by the printed word, which completely transformed the geography of the middle ages through practices of identification with fellow- nationals. Printing resulted in the replacement of the sacred language of the Middle Ages- Latin, Arabic, and Chinese, each of which united a vast territory with diverse regional, vernacular languages which were then standardized and spread in novels and newspapers. Anderson argues that in eighteenth century in Latin America and North America, the development of print enabled millions of individuals to represent their fellow-readers to themselves as compatriots. This was particularly marked in the case of daily newspapers because fellow nations imagined themselves together as they read the same news simultaneously. The most important conclusion of Anderson's historical investigations in that belonging

to a nation is an ongoing process of construction and identification rather than an objective fact or a timeless loyalty to the land and people (Nash, 2010, p.79).

Eli Kedourie, the Professor of politics in the University of London, believes that Nationalism is an issue related to Enlightenment Thought, French Revolution, and the birth of central state in France (E Kedourie, 1971). Therefore, in the idea of Kedourie, Nationalism is an elitist concept related to Kant and Enlightenment era (E Kedourie, 1971). However he, the same as some thinkers such as Lord Acton (1834), believed that the core of nationalism is romantic nationalism. In the idea of these writers nationalism was a destroying idea which in twentieth century treats humanity generally. Kedourie believed that nationalism itself gains force from German philosophy specially Fichte and sub branches of Kant's Ideas about liberty (Vincent, 1992, p.237). Moreover, he emphasized on the constructed character of national identity; and claimed that it is very often correct to say that national identity is the creation of a nationalist doctrine rather than nationalist doctrine is the emanation or expression of national identity (Spencer & Wollman, 2002, p.49).

One of the main important modernist thinkers related to nation and nationality is Eric Hobsbawm. He emphasized, in his famous book "Nations and nationalism since 1780", on modern root of Nation and nationalism. According to Hobsbawm: "the basic characteristic of modern nation and everything connected, is modernity... The dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy... does not use the terminology of state, nation and language in the modern manner before its edition in 1884" (Erik Hobsbawm, 1990, p.14). He explains "The Invention of Tradition" as a discussion of this phenomenon. In his idea these concepts were created in 18th and 19th century not in the ancient time. According to Hobsbawm:

"Invented traditions are highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovation, the nation, with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest. All this rests on exercises in social engineering which are deliberate and always innovative, if only because historical novelty implies innovation" (E Hobsbawm, 1983, p.13).

Nation and Nationalism in the idea of Hobsbawm isn't an ancient phenomenon. In other words, the foundations of nation is cultural not biological. However, some modernists such as John Breuilly (1985) provided a framework for the study of nationalism, in which he studied nationalism as a form of political forces (Breuilly, 1985, p.12).

Ernest Gellner is another writer who wrote about nation and nationalism. In the idea of Gellner "Nationalism, is the most important principle of political legitimacy in the modern world". He tried to reply this question: "why nationalism has key principle of political legitimacy of our times? And why nationalism is a necessary component

of modernity and why it is the most salient principle of political legitimacy?" (O'Leary, 1997).

Gellner in his book "Nations and Nationalism" emphasized that Nationalism belongs to modern era. At the first of his book he discussed: "Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (Gellner, 1983, p.1).

He believed there is no place and rational reasons for nationalism in pre modern agrarian societies. According to Gellner in agrarian society, there was a huge gap between feudal and peasants who produce food. In these kinds of societies, ideology can't fill this huge gap. In opposite, modern societies and industrial societies need cultural integration and can create an appropriate kind of ideology. The process of industrialization and urbanization destroyed the structure and construction of traditional culture and categorized many people in new urban classes. Gellner believed that it was Nationalism which could make the Nations with the integrities of these groups (Gellner, 1983, p.8-38).

Gellner's arguments about the elective affinity between nationalism and modernity are believable. Nationalism and nations have not been permanent features of human history. It is an ideology of mobilization and it is a more successful ideology comparing to other kinds of ideologies (O'Leary, 1997).

Marxist thinkers believed nation, nationalism and ethnic groups are formed by economic process and capitalism. Classical Marxist like Lenin (1870 – 1924) and Stalin believed nation and nationalism are shaped by bourgeois. They wished to have a society without classes. For Rosa Luxemburg (1871-1919), another Marxist theorist, Nationalism plays a reactionary role in capitalism era (Spencer & Wollman, 2002, p.11).

In general, for Marxists, class struggle is more important than nation and nationalism, but capitalism produces nationalism. For example Immanuel Wallerstein believed ethnic and ethnic groups are important actors in capitalist global economy. According to Wallerstein not only race and ethnicity, but also nation and nationalism are produced by capitalist world system. (Wallerstein & Balibar, 1991, p.87-107).

ETHNO - SYMBOLISM

As mentioned earlier, the two approaches of Primordialism and modernism which study the appearances of nation and nationalism's roots emphasize on pre-modern and modern era respectively. For getting a comprehensive theory about nation and nationalism, both theories should be considered. Fortunately some researchers have tried for mixing the two theories. For example James Mckey believes that primordial approach is appropriate to perceive the emotion of nation foundations and stability of ethnic

and nation relationship. Anyhow he argued this approach is not a comprehensive approach for investigating nation and nationalism phenomenon, because this approach has “psychological Reductionism” and because of this reason it can’t analyze social transformation and social evolution. In the idea of McKay primordial approach can’t consider economic and political factors in genesis of nation and nationalism (Ahmadi, 2009, p.100-101).

In investigating and analyzing nation and nationalism, Anthony Smith chooses the mix approach. He believed the roots of nationalism are related to ethnic phenomenon and nationalism is both modern and traditional (Smith, 1972, p.20). He tried to mix modern and pre modern feelings about nation and nationalism (Smith, 1991, p.45). According to Smith, nationalism as a movement is a modern phenomenon but it has pre modern roots. For correct and exact analyzing of nationalism, Smith emphasizes on investigating the effect of modernization on historical societies. By this way creation and expansion of nationalism in two centuries ago could be analyzed (Smith, 1981a, p.55). According to Smith, modern Nations have some features:

1. A clearly demarcated territory with a centre and recognized borders,
2. A legal-political community, with a single, standardized legal system,
3. A mass participation including civil and political rights for all members or citizens,
4. A mass, public culture disseminated to all members through a standardized, mass public education system,
5. The political status of sovereignty in an ‘international’ system of sovereign national states,
6. Legitimizing in terms of nationalist ideologies (A Smith, 2006, p.173).

However Smith strongly believed nationalism emerged in eighteen century as a political program, but the elements of nationalism emerged earlier. So in the idea of Smith modernist narrative of nationalism needs to be revised as well as of nations (Smith, 2008, p.16). The approach of ‘Ethno Symbolism’ is a ‘mid way’ approach for studying nations and nationalism. In this approach modern era is no *tabula rasa*:

“... it emerges out of the complex social and ethnic formations of earlier epochs, and the different kinds of *ethnie* [ethnic community], which modern forces transform, but never obliterate. The modern era in this respect resembles a palimpsest on which are recorded experiences and identities of different epochs and a variety of ethnic formations, the earlier influencing and being modified by the later, to produce the composite type of collective cultural unit which we call ‘the nation’” (Umut-Ozkirimli & Fred Halliday, 2000, p.169).

So Ethno-Symbolism approach refuses Primordialism and modernism but it mixed some features of both

modernism and Primordialism. This approach has some company with modernists on several key issues like Symbolic resources of nations, Conflicts, the role of Ethnicity and Elites and has some common senses with Primordialism such as history memories, values, myth and narratives as a source of nations and nationalism (Smith, 2009, p.12-20).

CONCLUSION

Concluding what was said, the researcher believes there is an ambiguity about the concept of nation and nationalism. However sociologists and anthropologists have consensus of definition of nation. They believe a nation contains common history, common myth, common language, common economic life, and a demarcated border as a country. When sociologists study on the origin of nation and nationalism they would be divided to several groups. Modernists study ethnicity and nationality as modern phenomenon which is produced by political elites. In the idea of Modernists, nations and nationalism is the product of modern state, bureaucracy, secularism and capitalism. Primordialists and Perennialists believe the origin of Ethnicity and Ethnic relations as the first conditions of humanity. According to this idea, governments, parties, bureaucracy and politics are the sign of ethnical and cultural identity gaps. Ethno-symbolism approach argues that in the study of origin of nation and nationalism both debates, modernists and Primordialist, are not enough to demonstrate all aspect of these phenomena. Ethno-symbolism chooses ‘mid way’ approach to show the origin of nation and nationalism. In this approach it is argued that nation and nationalism have ethnic and historical roots. However nation and nationalism don’t have biological roots and they appeared in modern era but every nation has ethnical roots, common memories, myth and values.

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