

Sept. 30, 2009

7 ETHNICITY, STATE, NATION

Read: Eriksen, 2002. Ethnic identity and ideology: 59-77, Ethnicity in history: 78-96
David Maybury-Lewis, 2002. Ethnic groups: 47-79

- I. Today we'll discuss
 - A. Pre-modern and modern
 1. Differences and similarities between national states of the modern era and earlier formations
 2. Review how nationalism/nations developed
 - B. We'll continue to review nationalism and the role of ethnic identity
- II. Pre-modern period
 - A. Tribes
 1. **DISCUSS:** What do you think of when you hear this word?
 - a. "Other"
 - b. Exotic
 - 1) Examples from the movies?
 2. Tribal societies have classically been seen as:
 - a. Small-scale (not large populations)
 - b. With their interaction structured around:
 - 1) Kinship networks and face-to-face interaction
 3. "Tribal" is an anthropological classification, although a problematic one
 - a. Pre-modern, small-scale unit applied to three types of subsistence modes
 - 1) Hunter-gatherers
 - 2) Horticulturalists

- a) Subsistence mode lacking the plow and draft animals
 - b) Note that horticulturalist societies can in fact be very large—some African kingdoms an example
 - 3) Nomadic pastoralists
- B. “Tribal” societies characterized by these subsistence modes are contrasted with the great pre-modern dynastic states
 - 1. Which were characterized by an agrarian subsistence mode, the fourth: plow and draft animals
 - a. “The fertile crescent”: Babylonia, etc. were agrarian
 - 2. Some pre-modern states were horticulturalist
 - a. New World (Aztec, Maya, Inca)
 - 3. In general these great ancient states developed where water was scarce (exception: Maya)
 - a. One hypothesis (overly simple) argues that civilizations developed in arid zones because there was a need to organize to develop the technology that allowed for optimal water distribution
 - b. As well as develop a socio-political organization that ensured an appropriate distribution
 - c. More familiar: feudal agrarian states in Europe
 - 4. These states weren’t integrated nationally
 - a. Their subjects were locally integrated, under the rule of a member of the nobility who collected tribute
 - b. Socialization and social control were largely handled locally
 - c. Armies tended to be professional, without the ideology of “moral duty of all to fight for their country” we find in nations
 - 5. Compared with modern nation-states these earlier dynastic states
 - a. Placed few demands on the majority of their citizens

- 1) Note: oppression, exploitation could be brutal
 - a) Building Egyptian, Mayan pyramids
- 2) But few demands on them *as citizens*—not much state bureaucracy
- b. No nation-building was needed because the boundaries were always shifting, no sense of a need to have populations within the borders share a culture, language
 - 1) The subject populations just needed to be loyal to the rulers, pay taxes, consent to be conscripted as labor (e.g., road-building), etc.
- c. Pre-modern dynastic kingdoms in Europe weren't "French" or "British" as they are understood today
 - 1) Inhabitants were *subjects* to a monarch, not *citizens*

III. Modernity

- A. Ethnic identity formation and boundary maintenance increase
 1. Ethnic identities tend to attain their greatest importance in situations of
 - a. Flux, potential ambiguity
 - b. Change
 - c. Resource competition
 - d. Threats against boundaries
- B. Ethnic identity formation and attention to boundary maintenance are found in societies undergoing modernization:
 1. Industrializing
 2. The scale increases: a large number of people might participate in the same economic system
 3. Ideologies based in kinship, feudalism and religion were no longer capable of organizing people efficiently

4. Eriksen provides a number of examples from Africa showing how ethnic formation changes, adapts

C. **DISCUSS**: what characteristics do the pre-modern great agrarian states and modern states share?

IV. Nationalism and ethnicity

A. Note that “isms” refer to sets of beliefs, theories, ideologies

1. **DISCUSS**: meaning of “ideology”? Eriksen’s argument about ethnic ideology?

2. Two main—often interrelated—meanings for ideology

- a. First, a pejorative meaning: a given ideology is in fact an illusion, a set of false ideas

- b. Second meaning: the set of ideas that arise from a definite social class or group

B. Definitions of the ideology of nationalism and the associated problems?

1. Gellner: a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent

- a. But, asks Eriksen, what is “the national unit”?

2. Another way to define nationalist ideology: the belief that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones

3. Nationalism holds that the political organization should be ethnic in character in that it represents the interests of a particular ethnic group

4. Another definition: ethnic ideologies that hold that their group should dominate a state

C. So, nationalism is an ideology about culture and power

1. Self-conscious culture

- a. By now we understand that nation-building requires “talk about culture”

2. Nationalism *reifies* culture—**DISCUSS**

- a. Enables people to talk about their culture as though it were a thing, a constant

D. Theories about the causes of the rise of nationalism

1. All scholars mention the role played by modernization
2. All scholars mention the role played by industrialization
3. An article by Segal and Handler¹ argue that the rise of nationalism in Europe and the Americas must be seen in the larger context of colonization
 - a. They insist that analyses of nationalism must look at the entire global picture
 - b. They provide a critique of Euro-centric views of the development of nationalism
 - c. They argue that all analyses of nationalism have to examine the political economy of colonialism and the role of racial ideologies in justifying it
 - d. For instance, they argue that we cannot look at British nationalism's evolution without looking at Ireland as a colony; and at the Atlantic coast colonies; at the British West Indies
4. Various authors, in addition to Segal and Handler, argue that much of the theoretical characterization of nationalism does not fit the nation-building processes that take place in former colonies
 - a. For example, Eriksen's example of Trinidad: its nationalism is built not on autochthonous, indigenous people and their culture, nor on ancient folkways being re-discovered
 - 1) Rather, it's built on forging a nation out of 2 immigrant populations: African and E. Indian
 - 2) Nationalism consequently looks very different in countries like Trinidad
 - 3) **DISCUSS:** Eriksen's discussion of the changing ethnic formation of East Indians and blacks in Trinidad?

¹ Daniel Segal and Richard Handler, 1992. How European is nationalism? *Social Analysis* 32: 1-15.

5. A new kind of nationalist ideology is required if former colonies are to successfully develop into nation-states, if they are to be capable of creating cohesion and loyalties
6. Benedict Anderson's argument about nationalism: it posits an **imagined community**
 - a. *Imagined* because members of nations will never know the vast majority of their fellow members; *community* because the ideology holds that members share a culture
 - b. The same goes for large ethnic groups: much of this characterization fits Eriksen's and Maybury-Lewis's discussions of ethnic groups: imagined ethnic community
 - c. What's special to the nationalist "imagined community" is that it is seen to be embedded in the state
 - d. The national state is imagined by its members as both inherently limited and sovereign
 - e. The ideology holds that members' loyalty and attachment should be directed towards the state and the legislative system
 - 1) Rather than predominantly towards members of their kin group, religion or village
7. Ethnic groups
 - a. Often are modern phenomena
 - b. Not to say there weren't kin groups, languages, cultures, etc., before
 - c. Most pre-modern states ruled over multiple ethnically distinct populations
 - d. A few polities (political units) were pluriethnic—Maybury-Lewis gives an example of the three Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokland in Central Asia before the Tsarist rule in the 1870s
 - 1) Different ethnic groups occupied different ecological niches

- e. But most pre-modern states were ruled by an elite speaking one language, practicing one religion, etc., who dominated the other populations residing within the state's borders
8. Both Eriksen and Maybury-Lewis make the point that an ethnic group is created by people *deciding* one exists and is important
- a. Maybury-Lewis: everyone has a latent qualification for ethnic association: language, skin color, live in places that have a history
 - b. Ethnicity comes into play only when one or more of these criteria are *activated* and said to be the defining characteristics of a group
- E. Obviously nationalist ideology serves the interests of the state
- 1. Which needs popular support
- F. What would the benefits to citizens be?
- 1. The nation-state offers security and is seen to offer stability
 - a. Scholars suggest that at a time of fragmentation of life-worlds, including moral worlds, and the geographical mobility increasingly required by "free labor"
 - b. The offer of such stability and security may be very appealing
 - 2. Nationalism creates a sentiment of wholeness and continuity with the past
 - 3. Transcends the alienation or rupture between individual and society produced by modernity
- G. Nationalism, like any "ism," needs believers
- 1. Nationalism works to change the abstract, anonymous nature of national identity
 - 2. What are the processes that result in "true believers"?
 - a. Anderson says that nationalism derives its force from the way it combines political legitimation and emotional power
 - 3. The goal is to create beliefs accompanied by passion, strong sentiment
 - 4. The force and persistence of national identity depends in part on arousing such sentiment

- a. Example: people willing to die for their nation
- 5. Symbols and rituals that have the power of creating loyalty and a feeling of belongingness
- 6. How to maintain and reinforce nationalist sentiments, loyalties?
 - a. **DISCUSS:** Examples?
 - b. Monuments?
 - 1) Viet Nam Memorial
 - c. Ceremonies?
 - 1) John F. Kennedy's funeral
 - 2) **DISCUSS:** a more recent example?
- 7. These symbols and rituals have instrumentalist functions as well as expressive/affect ones
 - a. Example: Inauguration of the U.S. president
 - 1) Chief justice swears in the incoming president, whose left hand is on the Bible
 - 2) **DISCUSS:** other examples?
- 8. Also: the goal of constructing the nation as moral
 - a. **DISCUSS:** examples?
- 9. Symbols, metaphors appropriated from people's everyday experience
 - a. That work to transform the anonymous, abstract state
 - b. One is metaphoric kinship
 - c. Eriksen's example: In Iran the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the US was depicted as an adulterous infidel who raped and mistreated Iran, depicted as a woman—as a mother-country
 - d. Ruling classes of a nation often look to religion and myth for its symbolism

- e. The symbols may suggest violence
 - 1) Martyrs: Abraham Lincoln's assassination
 - 2) Military parades on Independence Day
 - a) The state has a monopoly on legitimate violence
 - b) Citizens can feel secure

- f. Much of the symbolism involves other nations, highlight the ethnic/cultural differences; sometimes the racial differences
 - 1) Theme of competition
 - 2) Conflicts
 - a) At the beginning of the Iraq war, when France didn't support the U.S. position: "Liberty fries" rather than "French fries"
 - b) "Kindergarten" a forbidden word during World War I
 - (1) "Hamburgers" became "Salisbury steak"
 - 3) Nation-states fight metaphoric wars in international sports
 - a) Official—Olympics
 - b) **DISCUSS**: unofficial examples?
 - 4) Assertions of cultural superiority
 - a) Example of France claiming that French food, wine, cosmetics, language are superior

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