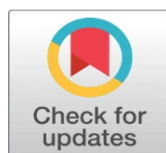
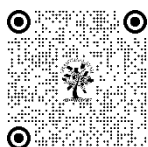


# THE POLITICAL ARC OF NATIONALISM: MODERNITY, OBLIGATION(S) AND THE 'COMMUNITY'

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to excavate the notion of political community enshrined in the concept of Nationalism. It seeks to understand the way in which the concept of Nationalism, whether as an ideology or a doctrine, inscribes the political ontology of 'community' understood as a nation. Further, this allows us to render the notion of obligation inherent in the concept, which structures the hierarchy of obligations informing a community wherein the idea of political obligation is understood to be foremost. Accordingly, the paper proceeds in three sections: the first provides an overview of the literature describing the various iterations of modern Nationalism; the second seeks to explain the political ontology of the collective/community/nation in the concept of Nationalism, thereby drawing out notion(s) of obligation embedded in its various iterations; the third section looks at the temporal and spatial arc of/in Nationalism which deals with Nationalism as an ideology relating it both to its historical character and its political (ideological) future(s).

**Keywords:** Nationalism, Liberal Nationalism, Ethnic Nationalism, Cultural Nationalism, Ideology

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to deepen our understanding of Nationalism's complexities and its implications for the contemporary world. Acknowledging the diversity of nationalist expressions is crucial for navigating the challenges and opportunities of Nationalism in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. At its core, Nationalism revolves around the idea of a nation as a cohesive community bound by shared characteristics such as culture, language, history, and often ethnicity. However, the expression of Nationalism can vary significantly, giving rise to different forms that reflect unique historical, cultural, and ideological contexts. Nationalism, a potent force in human history, has shaped nations' political landscapes and cultural identities worldwide. Nationalism, as a prominent socio-political ideology, has evolved into various forms, shaping societies' identities, aspirations, and conflicts worldwide.

## 2. THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN NATION-STATE AND THE IDEA OF NATIONALISM

Before delving into the genealogy and archaeology of Nationalism, it is pertinent to mention the notion of a modern nation-state that stands at the helm of Nationalism. Human beings right, since the dawn of civilization, have formed some

form of political community. Earlier, the tribal clans were replaced by kingdoms, churches, empires, and nation-states. Human beings are still in the process of furthering the political community to that of global government. David Held, Quinten Skinner, and Theda Skocpol find the origins of the modern nation-state in 12th and 13th-century Europe. However, the Treaty of Westphalia is mainly marked as the origin of the nation-state both in conceptual and practical forms. According to Held, the changes that "contributed to the transformation of medieval notions of politics were complicated" (Held, 1995, 66). Held further mentions that from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century, two different regimes emerged in Europe: the absolutist and constitutional monarchies.

The revolutionary France and the Napoleonic era further demonstrated the emergence of Nationalism as a potent ideology and political force. After Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, there was a thaw for a few decades. However, the unification of Germany at the hands of Bismarck and later Italy at the hands of Mazzini forced the return of nationalistic rhetoric in European politics. With a swift emergence at the head of European power politics at the beginning of the twentieth century, Germany made Nationalism an essential force in world politics. Japan also began to assert nationalistic fervour, which paved the way for the emergence of Nationalism in Asia. After the World War, there emerged a hope that the League of Nations would become a beacon of hope for a liberal internationalist world with ample possibilities for cooperation. However, the fissions with the peace settlement of Versailles, where Germany and Italy thought that they were mistreated, subsequently led to the emergence of Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy. The ugliest turn of Nationalism could be seen during World War Second, where scores of people died in a war that was prompted by Nationalism.

Nationalism, however, played a constructive role during the decolonization struggles in Asia and Africa. It is because of the idea of Nationalism that local polities in colonies organized themselves against the colonial occupation.

Foundational to the concept of Nationalism is the assumption/belief that a nation- community of individuals- is the organizing principle of an overarching political organization that can legitimately represent the nation. Heywood (2022) notes that it is fundamentally structured on two central premises: firstly, the division of humans into nations is obtained naturally, and secondly, this division is the legitimate basis for forming political communities. Legitimacy is derived from the 'primordial' form of human organization, which represents a legitimate basis of organization in terms of self-regarding political units. However, at this point, the discussion over the concept of Nationalism diverges into two broad strains: one regards this position as an ideological vision and the second regards it as a doctrine. In the context of Nationalism as a doctrine, its classical expression is the belief that nations deserve to be recognized as independent political units organized into a realm of nation-states. The ideological strain, however, lends this same concept to further admixture from ethnic, cultural, and political logic. According to Andrew Heywood, "Political nationalism" represents an attempt to further political goals by invoking the ideal of the nation, whereas "Cultural nationalism emphasizes the regeneration of the nation as a distinctive civilization, and thus stresses the need to defend or strengthen a national language, religion, or way of life..." (Heywood, 2022:140).

Meanwhile, it is essential to understand the different strains of Nationalism to grasp its diverse manifestations. Ethnic Nationalism, while sharing elements with Cultural Nationalism, is a more intense strain as it implies a more profound sense of 'distinctiveness and exclusivity'. There are four further iterations of Political Nationalism (Heywood, 2022) viz: Liberal Nationalism, conservative Nationalism, expansionist Nationalism and anti-colonial Nationalism. However, conservative and expansionist tendencies can be seen as occurring within liberal and anti-colonial Nationalism, depending on the political spectrum and the makeup of political antagonism in a given context.

Nationalism is not uncontested; it may appear in various ways and serve multiple political goals. It may adopt conservative, fascist, liberal, socialist, or Marxist ideologies. All political doctrines have employed nationalist sentiment to achieve their objectives. Even anarchism, while less impacted by nationalist sentiments, is nonetheless shaped by national identity and anarchist contacts inside nations, which provide diverse theoretical perspectives to the movement. In essence, nationalism centres on the conviction, and frequently the insistence, that every country deserves to be ruled by its autonomous government (Harrison, K., & Boyd, 55-71)).

### 3. NATIONALISM: REVISITING PATHWAYS TO 'COMMUNITY' IN MODERNITY

Most historians concur that modern Nationalism emerged primarily in Europe. Hans Kohn asserts that its roots lie in the 17th and 18th centuries, gaining momentum in the nineteenth century across Europe. By the twentieth century, it had evolved into a potent force shaping global politics (Kohn, 1944:3). Although Nationalism has evolved in various

forms, its precise definition remains elusive. However, scholars like Prof. Hans Kohn offer insights, defining it as a mindset where individuals prioritize loyalty to the nation-state above all else. Kohn describes it as a dynamic collective will, asserting the nation-state's supremacy as the ideal form of governance and attributing cultural and economic vitality to nationality (Kohn, 1965:9). Similarly, K.R. Minogue characterizes Nationalism as a set of ideas facilitating the transmission of political fervour from elites to the masses (Minogue, 1967:9).

Nationalism is commonly understood as a feeling of attachment, allegiance, or affinity that unites a community through common customs, traditions, and governance structures, promoting a sense of cohesion among them. Beyond its ideological aspect, Nationalism also holds a tangible meaning. It can denote specific ways of expressing national spirit, encompassing a people's social, political, and national aspirations. In this context, Nationalism comprises the ideas shaping a nation's life and actions. Like religion, Nationalism manifests in diverse ways and holds different meanings for individuals. At its core, it embodies a mindset marked by a strong personal connection to others and a recognition of a collective destiny shaped by shared histories. This viewpoint suggests that Nationalism is more than just a political ideology; it is a human phenomenon evolving over time and in space. Moreover, it is a universal desire for freedom and advancement (Kohn, 1962: 10).

Nationalism, as a doctrine, operates on the premise that humanity is segmented into distinct national entities, each characterized by unique traits. Patriotism, rooted in an innate attachment to one's homeland, has existed in various forms throughout history. Similarly, the sense of personal identification with a political entity has existed in human society. Nationalism emerges as a fusion of these ancient emotional bonds. According to Prof. C.J.H. Hayes, it represents a contemporary amalgamation and amplification of two fundamental concepts: nationality and patriotism (1926:5-29); nationality is not an inherent trait but rather a product of socialization and habitual learning. While it may manifest politically, it embodies a cultural identity (Plamenatz 1976:23-36). Nationality hinges on a shared belief among its members, emphasizing common heritage and traditions. Patriotism, however, denotes affection for one's native land, present in various forms since antiquity. This sentiment of loyalty expanded to encompass one's village, tribe, nation, or nationality. The fixation of supreme loyalty on one's nation or nationality marks the advent of the nationalist era (Kohn 1944:18). The convergence of nationality and patriotism gave rise to modern Nationalism.

#### 4. OBLIGATION AND ONTOLOGY OF/IN THE NATION

Ethnic Nationalism underscores a deep connection among members of a nation based on shared characteristics such as race, language, or cultural traits, which persist across generations. Membership in the nation is seen as inherent, passed down through birth and ancestry, and linked to genetic heritage. This identity is not easily relinquished by obtaining citizenship in another country or completing an application form. For example, ethnic Germans who had resided in what eventually emerged as Russia could seek to return to German territory and reclaim their nationality, historically holding a more substantial entitlement to German citizenship compared to Turkish 'guest workers' and their German-born offspring. Conversely, civic Nationalism serves as the foundation of American, French, or British Nationalism. It emphasizes shared historical ties among the nation's people, connections that can be extended to others through citizenship and the accompanying allegiances and duties. This type of Nationalism does not impose ethnic criteria on potential membership in the nation. However, putting civic Nationalism into effect can be tricky since current citizens of the country may be fiercely opposed to enormous population increases by citizenship attainment.

In contrast to other ideologies, Nationalism lacks a formalized theory concerning human nature. While it may propose theories regarding the distinct characteristics of particular cohorts, like the purported 'soul' of Russians or the English devotion to equity, Nationalism hints at a broader viewpoint on human nature. Nationalists argue that each nation inherently represents a cohesive unit, with bonds among its members seen as innate and advantageous. Therefore, the well-being of the nation is considered the highest good for the individual. Nationalism emphasizes allegiance to the nation over any other political or social loyalties. While individuals may prioritize ethical or religious convictions over national identification, Nationalism contends that such values must give way to allegiance to the nation during strife. Furthermore, Nationalism not only sets a country at the centre of political devotion but also simultaneously believes that the nation is the only acceptable foundation for any political undertaking. As a result, the nation, including its members, can legitimately demand resources, lives, and other sacrifices to preserve the collective's existence.

A significant question in Nationalism is whether a country is actually 'natural'. While some argue that nations are constructed entities influenced by works of literature or state power mechanisms, Nationalism assumes that "the citizens" or 'the nation' constitute a state with sovereign rights and intrinsic integration based on factors such as 'blood,' 'culture,' or 'citizenship.' (Harrison, K., & Boyd, 55-71). Now, let us delve into these aspects of Nationalism: 'the sovereignty of the people', 'ethnic nationalism', and 'civic nationalism'. From the standpoint of Popular Sovereignty, the concept of the 'nation' essentially aligns with the 'people,' implying that individuals are bonded into a collective entity united by a conveyed patriotic affinity with the entire country. National sovereignty is essential in nurturing allegiance to the state or in movements by subordinate nations aiming to establish their sovereignty. Conservatives perceive popular sovereignty as a means to cultivate national solidarity, transcending class, religion, and other societal divisions. Conversely, radicals utilize it to galvanize public support against oppressive regimes. Appeals to popular sovereignty are visible in revolutionary manuscripts like the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. (1789) (Harrison, K., & Boyd, 55-71).

## 5. TEMPORAL AND SPATIAL ARC OF/NATIONALISM

In the realm of ideologies, Nationalism constructs a comprehensive belief system, weaving together a coherent set of principles and values that assign significance to the past, provide an understanding of the present, and propose directions for the future for a particular social group. Unlike other ideologies, Nationalism is characterized by its emotive and passionate nature, often relying less on intellectual analysis and more on profound emotional connections. According to the Liberal Nationalist ideology, humanity is inherently distributed into nations, each entitled to specific territorial boundaries where they should possess sovereignty and self-governance, having their own political systems. National liberty, like human rights, is seen as ubiquitous. Such a perspective on Nationalism is compatible with the most internationalist, pacifist, and idealistic aspects of liberalism. Supporters of this ideology, like Giuseppe Mazzini in Italy, imagined a global scenario where independent states would esteem one another's national independence and willingly cooperate within international frameworks. This concept was widely embraced by liberal nationalists in the early 1800s and reflected in the uprisings of 1848, which were influenced by liberal principles but frequently quashed by alarmed governments. It was believed that such Nationalism would involve ensuring the protection of minority rights, whether they be ethnic, religious, or linguistic in nature. Liberals and certain socialists in the 19th century increasingly embraced this more palatable version of Nationalism. After World War I, this brand of Nationalism experienced a resurgence with the formation of the League of Nations, which was built upon the ideals of national self-determination and collective security. Post-World War II, this type of Nationalism manifested in institutions like the United Nations and other liberal international organizations focused on overseeing human rights and promoting a global free-trade economy. However, supporters of liberal Nationalism tend to overlook the difficulties connected with recognizing natural national entities in terms of population, geographical area, and economic sustainability. They also minimize Nationalism's propensity for malice while emphasizing its good qualities. Nonetheless, liberal Nationalism continues to substantially affect many modern nationalist groups (Harrison, K., & Boyd, 55-71).

Following the failed liberal-nationalist uprisings in 1848, Nationalism in numerous European states became increasingly interweaved with conservative and reactionary movements. These groups aimed to establish and protect national institutions against perceived threats from revolutionary movements and socialism. Nationalism evolved into a tool used by some to suppress the national identity of certain citizens to maintain the unity of the larger nation. This dynamic was especially noticeable in vast, multi-ethnic empires like Austro-Hungary and Russia, where ruling powers grappled with asserting imperial Nationalism and unity over the aspirations of various subordinate nations seeking greater autonomy and independence. After 1870, reactionary Nationalism became even more prominent in Europe with the rise of the Third French Republic and the reunification of Germany. It became deeply entwined with an inherent national identity, including linguistics, cultural traditions, faith, social stratification, and cultural norms. It took the form of racism, imperialism, and assertions of supremacy over "subordinate" nations abroad, combined with fierce diplomatic and armed competition with other countries.

Rejecting socialism and liberalism, the resulting strain of Nationalism became a powerful ideological alternative, especially with the newly empowered masses. By the turn of the 20th century, communist and socialist forces in most democratic nations in the West were trying to dissociate themselves from Nationalism in general and this regressive kind of Nationalism in particular because they saw it as strongly linked to conservatism. While reactionary Nationalism often stresses patriotism and the nation's uniqueness, it is not inherently imperialistic, although it may have been linked



to the 'popular imperialism' of the late nineteenth century. Furthermore, it usually shows apathy towards world events if other countries do not meddle in its issues (Harrison, K., & Boyd, 55-71).

Though its roots may be found in the French Revolution, radical Nationalism first surfaced in the wake of World War I. It was characterized by a yearning to overhaul the internal and/or global order in devotion to one's own country, and it took two primary forms. One form, which was primarily right-wing ideologically, disapproved of the old order, the elite classes, and obsolete institutions because they believed they betrayed the country. It often advocated for robust social, economic, and political reforms to rejuvenate the nation, presenting a substitute for the globalism of communism and socialism following the Russian Revolution. In countries like Germany and Turkey, defeat in war fueled this form of Nationalism; however, despite the heavy price paid for their official successes, it also emerged in France and Italy.

Radical Nationalism of this kind turned to be aggressive in its assertions against neighbouring governments and hostile to minorities who were seen as not truly belonging to the country. In its most severe manifestation, it glorified the supremacy of the nation over others and could justify wars of territorial expansion, quickly transitioning into fascism. Radical Nationalism, on the other hand, may go entirely in the opposite direction, fighting conservative or imperial extremist Nationalism in an anti-colonial struggle. In this instance, it promoted independence from repressive governmental systems by appealing to nationalist ideals. It referred to the justification for national sovereignty and notions of national autonomy. The collapse of the European empires in the period that followed World War II was primarily due to Nationalism. This type of Nationalism, which drew on aboriginal societies' community principles and aimed to topple the colonial ruling elites, frequently had a significant socialist aspect at this time. After attaining independence, this kind of Nationalism opposed Western political, cultural, and economic dominance—often called "neo-colonialism"—prompting some developing nations to nationalize assets held by foreign multinationals operating inside their territory (Harrison, K., & Boyd, 55-71).

## 6. CONCLUSION

The evolution of Nationalism across different historical contexts reveals its diverse manifestations and multifaceted nature. From its origins in liberal Nationalism to its transformation into reactionary and radical forms, Nationalism has been a potent force shaping societies and international relations. While liberal Nationalism emphasized universal rights and cooperation among sovereign nations, reactionary Nationalism sought to preserve traditional identities and hierarchies, often at the expense of minority groups and through imperialistic endeavours. Radical Nationalism, on the other hand, manifested in both right-wing movements advocating for national rejuvenation and anti-colonial struggles seeking independence from oppressive regimes. The complexities of Nationalism underscore its dual potential as a force for both liberation and oppression. While it has played a pivotal role in the ending of colonial empires and the assertion of national self-determination, it has also been used to justify aggression, exclusion, and discrimination. Moreover, Nationalism's intersections with ideologies such as socialism, fascism, and imperialism highlight its adaptability and susceptibility to manipulation for various political ends. As we navigate the complexities of Nationalism in the modern world, it becomes imperative to examine its historical roots and contemporary manifestations critically. By understanding the different forms and motivations behind nationalist movements, societies can strive towards fostering inclusive and equitable forms of identity and governance while mitigating the potential for conflict and division. Ultimately, the study of Nationalism serves as a reminder of the intricate interplay between identity, power, and ideology in shaping human societies and global politics.

The emergence of Nationalism with populist tendencies seems to challenge the liberal norms in general and the liberal internationalist order in particular. The rise of right-wing politics in the United States and Europe has recuperated the academic interest in the idea of Nationalism. Donald Trump's rhetoric of 'America first' and meteoric rise of political rights in France, Italy and Germany have brought back a sense of Nationalism in Europe and elsewhere on the Globe. Allegedly, once a dead ideology, Nationalism has returned with force, and the effects of this revival need to be looked at.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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