

Feb. 24, 2005

## 7 ETHNICITY, STATE, NATION

Read: Eriksen, Nationalism

Segal and Handler: How European is nationalism?

I. Two readings for today

A. One, Eriksen, in a textbook somewhat like your physics texts—attempts to generalize, provide definitions

You don't need to understand the differences between Hobsbawm, Gellner, Anderson and Eriksen himself

B. The other, by Segal and Handler, provides an example of scholarship in action: they present an argument directed at other scholars

1. Segal and Handler make a sweeping critique of the literature about how to theorize the nation-state—the same literature discussed by Eriksen

II. Today I'll cover<sup>1</sup>

A. Pre-modern

1. Differences and similarities between nation-states and earlier formations

2. How nationalism/nations developed

B. Briefly discuss modernity, the state

C. And go back to nationalism

III. Pre-modern period

A. Tribes

1. 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:

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<sup>1</sup> This lecture draws on the Eriksen reading

- 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—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. Agrarian societies, a fourth subsistence mode: plow and draft animals
    - a. “The fertile crescent”: Babylonia, etc. were agrarian
  - 3. Some pre-modern states were horticulturalist
    - a. New World (Aztec, Maya, Inca)
  - 4. In general these 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. Feudal agrarian states in Europe

5. These states weren't integrated nationally
  - a. Their subjects were locally integrated
  - 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
  
6. 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 *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—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*

#### IV. 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
      - 1) There is a lot of anthropological literature on ecological niches occupied by different ethnic groups in pre-modern societies

- 2) Members of such groups see them to be clearly bounded
        - a) But often in fact a lot of exchange of every kind occurs, including intermarriage
      - 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
  - C. **Discuss:** what characteristics do the pre-modern great agrarian states and modern states share?
- V. Nationalism
- A. Note that “isms” refer to sets of beliefs, theories, ideologies
    - 1. **Discuss:** meaning of “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
    - a. Enables people to talk about their culture as though it were a thing, a constant
    - b. Segal and Handler’s idea that nationalism attempts to construct bounded cultural objects
- 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. Segal and Handler argue that the rise of nationalism must be seen in the larger context of colonization
    - a. They insist that analyses of nationalism must look at the entire global picture
    - b. And provide a critique of Euro-centric views of the development of nationalism
      - 1) They say we have to see the rise of nationalism in global terms
    - 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, 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, Trinidad's nationalism is built not on autochthonous, indigenous people and their culture, nor on ancient folkways being re-discovered
      - 1) Rather, its built on forging a nation out of 2 immigrant populations: African and E. Indian
      - 2) Nationalism consequently looks very different in countries like Trinidad
  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. One theory, developed by Benedict Anderson, holds that nationalism 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. This "imagined community" is embedded in the state
    - c. The nation-state is imagined by its members as both inherently limited and sovereign
    - d. 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
- 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
    - a. Examples?
    - b. Monuments?
      - 1) Viet Nam Memorial
    - c. Ceremonies?
      - 1) John F. Kennedy’s funeral
      - 2) **Discuss:** a more recent example?
  - 6. 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?
  
- 7. Also: the goal of constructing the nation as moral
  - a. **Discuss:** examples?
  
- 8. Symbols, metaphors appropriated from people's everyday experience
  - a. That work to transform the anonymous, abstract state
  - b. Metaphoric kinship
 

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
  - c. Ruling classes of a nation often look to religion and myth for its symbolism
  - d. 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
  - e. Much of the symbolism involves other nations
    - 1) Theme of competition
    - 2) Conflicts
      - a) "Liberty fries" rather than "French fries"
      - b) "Kindergarten" a forbidden word during World War I
    - 3) Nation-states fight metaphoric wars in international sports

- a) Official—Olympics
  - b) Unofficial examples?
- 4) Assertions of cultural superiority
- a. Example of France claiming that French food, wine, cosmetics, language are superior