A Brief Analysis on Nationalism

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Abstract. What does it mean by a "nation" or a "nation-state" when scholars address them, and in what ways are they imagined? How is national solidarity imaginarily achieved? By default, linguists and political theorists assumed the nation to be a social construct, an entity imagined by a commune of people sharing some kinship or common ideological beliefs. For these people, they don't need to be bound to some existing connections such as vernacular connotations; especially from Benedict Anderson's perspective, today's modern world relies upon an unfailing realm wherein members feel a "horizontal" comradeship with each other. In all, this paper furthers Anderson's argument to show the powerful, upper class might use the concept of nation to safeguard their dominating social status, and thereby become an unshakable, solidified existence in the social world. To prove the aforementioned claim, it first recaps Anderson's core argument, "the nation does not exist, it is imagined". Most people may consider that they reside in the same nation because of their biological inheritance, as they and people alike look very similar since, they were born. As a result, a primitive perception of a nation is born out of a community united by blood. Yet with the advancement of human civilization, the different nations loosened connections with each other through immigration and active interpenetration: warfare, cross-regional marketing, and chaos and rebellions. "No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely because they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times." (Benedict Anderson p.1) Ultimately, it shows people create noumenal evidence to show that they are in a nation that has been existing for a long time, nevertheless, the unreality of these substances may induce more existential problems.

Keywords: Benedict Anderson; Nationalism; Political Theory; Comparative Analysis.

1. Introduction

By default, linguists and political theorists assumed the nation to be a social construct, an entity imagined by a commune of people sharing some kinship or common ideological beliefs. For these people, they don't need to be bound to some existing connections such as vernacular connotations; especially from Benedict Anderson's perspective, today's modern world relies upon an unfailing realm wherein members feel a "horizontal" comradeship with each other. In all, this paper furthers Anderson's argument to show the powerful, upper class might use the concept of nation to safeguard their dominating social status, and thereby become an unshakable, solidified existence in the social world. To prove the aforementioned claim, it first recaps Anderson's core argument, "the nation does not exist, it is imagined". Most people may consider that they reside in the same nation because of their biological inheritance, as they and people alike look very similar since they were born. As a result, a primitive perception of a nation is born out of a community united by blood. Yet with the advancement of human civilization, the different nations loosened connections with each other through immigration and active interpenetration: warfare, cross-regional marketing, and chaos and rebellions. "No more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these monuments precisely because they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times." (Benedict Anderson p.1) Ultimately, it shows people create noumenal evidence to show that they are in a nation that has been existing for a long time, nevertheless, the unreality of these substances may induce more existential problems.

2. Two Case Studies

To revisit Anderson's bold refutation against globalization, we must first see from his perspective that deems nationalism as a replacement for religion or a Feudal dynasty. "The century of the Enlightenment, of rationalist secularism, brought with it its own modern darkness. With the ebbing of religious belief, the suffering which belief in part composed did not disappear. The disintegration of paradise: nothing makes fatality more arbitrary. The absurdity of salvation: nothing makes another style of continuity more necessary."(Anderson,p.11) The nation thus is used to change death into continuity which is more meaningful than before, or that is, it gives people an immemorial past and a limitless future.

Anderson gives more attention to the culture is always as a solitary glue that unifies people together. In an attempt to explain why nationalism triumphed in the past, Anderson assumed ancient people make others accept their culture, forcibly or willingly in order to expand the nation. Language, as an important part of the culture thereby signifies the sign of social status in the past. However, the development of print capitalism makes the gain of books and other written works more accessible, which further decreased the scarcity of language and led to the decline of the Feudal dynasty. Consequently, the old community was broken down into fragmented parts.

Except for the decline of the old community, print capitalism also led to the form of new community, the nation. The print capitalism man creates a new form of language for people to use. It soon became popular, millions of people in the community started use the language. They soon find out the truth and this is the origin of the nation. People start to imagine and replenish the rest of the nation, which at the end became the imagined community.

But what do instances like the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam talk about nationalism? Anderson believed in nationalism in the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, nationalism usually convened with revolution. Therefore, domestic civilians are not determined by the dominance of the nation-based model and by unities of education and "administrative pilgrimages," that is, rather an anti-climax in those developed countries. The unnecessity to develop technology, additionally, proved low productivity or a determent force against the productive trend. Thus, compared with other countries, they are considered as: "fall behind".

3. A Sepearate View

To be clear, these countries once embraced a sanctioned, zealous communist-like nationalism, which means everything tends to serve the interest of the state first and foremost. Created by revolution, plutocratic people win the revolution and they want to keep their power, so they use nationalism. They want to use the power of the state to realize their vision. This is inevitable because whoever the revolutionary is, they always get the state from the fallen regime. The legacy left may be symbolic. For example, the leader of the CCP, congregate in the forbidden city and took everything left in the country.

The Vietnam case might further the aforementioned argument. "On his coronation in 1802, Gia-long wished to call his realm 'Nam Viet' and sent envoys to gain Peking's assent. The Manchu Son of Heaven, however, insisted that it be 'Viet Nam.' The reason for this inversion is as follows: 'Viet Nam' (or in Chinese Yiieh-nan) means, roughly, 'to the south of Viet (Yiieh),' a realm conquered by the Han seventeen centuries earlier and reputed to cover today's Chinese provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi, as well as the Red River valley. Gia-long's 'Nam Viet,' however, meant 'Southern Viet/ Yiieh,' in effect a claim to the old realm. "(Benedict Anderson pg157) Vietnam got its initial name from Peking. The leader of Vietnam tried to change its name in order to realize independence from other more powerful places. This may help form the nation. However, over centuries, Vietnam after changing its name several times, get changed into its initial name. The initial name is the legacy of the old regime which helps form a continuity of local culture.

Quite to the contrast, European nationalism of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was mostly a language-oriented problem. That nationalism and its derivative problems began with a great

flourishing of philological knowledge; dictionaries and grammartizations of discussions before and after obscured the very differentiations between modern Greek or Finnish and Norwegian, once essential preludes to the political nationalism particular to the 19th century. Since these nationalisms necessarily enforced all who spoke the mother-tongue, they had to be populist, unlike the New World nationalisms. The apparent anomoly of European states is deftly dismissed as belonging not in this category but in "the last wave" of Afro-Asian nationalisms after 1890, when nation-ness was so much the norm it could no longer be denied, and new technologies made it possible without linguistic uniformity.

4. Conclusion

To conclude with a brief analysis of the effectiveness of nationalism, in some countries, nationalism permeates due to technocratic success. Yet in Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh, the president who started modern Vietnam, had many connections with the central power before the country was established. However, after the country was formed, he severed all his connections in order to help the country reach independence. As we all know, Vietnam is a country that is affected by Chinese culture since ancient times. The leader of the nation always endeavors to fight against it and treats it as a kind of cultural invasion. As a kind of resistance, they try to get rid of all Chinese parts including the language, political system, and so on. This is very effective. People in Vietnam believe that they have the same culture and gradually formed an imagined community. Especially, in China wherein nationalism prevails, and after the revolution ended and the country formed, the leader pick up the thoughts of Confucius and try to inherit them. As it is accepted by the community, it gives a reasonable continuity to the culture. The language and other traditions seemed to be more acceptable to people. This helps keep the stability of the society and makes people imagine to consummate every part of the community.

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