The Introduction and Spread of Nationalism

James Gelvin, Part 3, Chapter 13
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Definitions: From Patriotism to Nazism and on

- **PATRIOTISM** - love for or devotion to one's country
- **NATIONALISM** - loyalty and devotion to a nation; especially: a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations or supranational groups.
- **CHAUVINISM** - excessive or blind patriotism, undue partiality or attachment to a group or place to which one belongs or has belonged, an attitude of superiority toward members of other ethnicities, races, nations, or of the opposite sex.
- **JINGOISM** - extreme chauvinism or nationalism marked especially by a belligerent foreign policy.
- **FASCISM** - a political philosophy, movement, or regime (as that of the Fascisti - WWII Italy) that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.
- **NAZISM** - the body of political and economic doctrines held and put into effect by the Nazis in Germany from 1933 to 1945 including the totalitarian principle of government, predominance of especially Germanic groups assumed to be racially superior, and supremacy of the führer.
- **IMPERIALISM** - the policy, practice, or advocacy of extending the power and dominion of a nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas; broadly: the extension or imposition of power, authority, or influence.
- **COLONIALISM** - the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.
Definitions: Forms of Government

- **AUTOCRACY** - a system of government by one person with absolute power. (Also, **MONARCHY**).
- **ARISTOCRACY** - a form of government in which power is held by the nobility. (Also, **OLIGARCHY**).
- **DEMOCRACY** - a system of government by the whole population or all the eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives.
- **ETHNOCRACY** - a form of government where representatives of a particular ethnic group advance the position of their ethnic group to the detriment of others.
- **THEOCRACY** - a system of government in which priests rule in the name of God or god.
- **BUREAUCRACY** - a system of government in which most of the important decisions are made by state officials rather than by elected representatives.
- **TECHNOCRACY** - the government or control of society or industry by an elite of technical experts.
- **PLUTOCRACY** - government by the wealthy.
- **ANARCHISM** - belief in the abolition of all government and the organization of society on a voluntary, cooperative basis without recourse to force or compulsion.
Getting history wrong is part of being a nation.

Ernest Renan (1823-1892)
French Philosopher

• In our time, Renan is most famous for the definition of a nation given in his 1882 discourse *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* ("What is a Nation?"). Whereas German writers like Fichte had defined the nation by objective criteria such as a "race" or an "ethnic group" (das Volk) sharing common characteristics (language, etc.), Renan defined it by the willfulness to live together. Writing in the midst of the dispute concerning the Alsace-Lorraine region, he declared that the existence of a nation was based on a "daily referendum" (un plébiscite de tous les jours).
All nationalists believe that ...

- humanity is naturally divided into smaller units or nations.
- nations can be identified by certain characteristics that all its citizens hold in common (race, language, dynasty, religion, culture, and history.)
- peoples have a special relationship to some particular piece of real estate in which their ancestors first emerged as a distinct group and flourished.
- nations possess something called “common interest” and it is the role of state to promote it.
- the only form of government that can assure the common interest of the nation is self-government.
All nationalist movements ...

- take one or more linguistic, religious, or ethnic attributes of a given group of people and claim that the attributes they have highlighted make that group a nation and entitle it to political independence in its ancestral homeland.

- and creeds are rooted in a common set of assumptions; therefore, it is relatively easy for people to switch from one to another as circumstances demand.

- succeed or fail not because they represent true or false identities and aspirations, but because of the often unpredictable circumstances in which nationalist movements find themselves.

- arise in opposition to some internal or external nemesis.

- are defined by what they oppose.
The ideology of nationalism...

- deals with assumptions about the organization of state and society; therefore, its advent in any given territory represents a truly revolutionary departure for the inhabitants of that territory.

- transforms subjects into citizens, and citizens into cogs of a machine grinding away for something called “the common good” (or common wealth.)

- a subject becomes a citizen with the Constitution that acknowledges his/her right to vote
The ideology of nationalism...

- puts country above the citizen and requires sacrifices for the nation,

- My fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country. JFK

- emerged with the modern state and gave modern state legitimacy and purpose by defining a group of people as a nation deserving a state of their own, by endowing that group of people with a common identity and common interest, and by making the state for advancing that common interest.
All nationalisms resemble **religious movements** in the sense that...

- they are based on a set of **myths** and **beliefs** (rather than rational analyses),
- they require from their **adherents**
  - to be absolutely loyal to the **higher cause**,  
  - to **venerate** their national **iconography** (flag, anthem) 
  - to participate in national **rituals** (parades) 
  - to respect the **cult** of a national hero/leader, and 
  - to **sacrifice** themselves for the **abstract entity** called nation.
Nationalism & Culture

• It is often claimed that some political behavior is determined by the national culture, (national role conceptions, national psyche), in other words, a commonly accepted point of view, which seems to be self-evident.

• The question, however, is what shapes that national culture, national psyche, and national conceptions, whether they are stagnant and unchangeable or whether they are political constructs and as such can be changed. The Social Learning Theory would guide us to the conclusion that our culture is shaped by our educational system, which is in turn shaped by politics.

• Just think of slavery as a part of the political and economic system of the Western world. Slavery was commonly accepted as a part of our daily life, culture, even as a God-given phenomenon and as such was justified through the Bible. For a great many churches for a long time being a Christian meant accepting slavery.

  • See Genesis 9:25-27 “Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers... May Canaan be the slave of Shem... and may Canaan be the slave of Japheth.”

• Nowadays, it is commonly accepted that the Bible is a subject to interpretation and a vast majority of Christian Churches do not promote slavery.
Nationalism & Historiography

- On the note of identity politics and change, Renan believes in science and education and that the true knowledge of history would eventually dispel the national(ist) mythology.

- Renan: “Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say, historical error is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality.” (source: Ernest Renan, “What is a nation?,” in Becoming National: A Reader, ed. by Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, translated by Martin Thom, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 45)

- What is forgotten and what is not will make the collective memory of a people, which will serve as a base for national identity formation.

- According to modernists and constructionists, what is forgotten and what is not is decided by the elites who shape the educational system based on their political visions and interests.

- Hence, nation is primarily based on the plebiscite/political agreement of the elites. Other factors are a subject to interpretation and manipulation.
Nationalism in the Middle East
Ottoman Empire

• Although the Ottoman Empire, like the Habsburg, Russian, or Chinese empires, may have called itself an empire over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries it increasingly came to resemble a modern state.

• STATE = a nation or territory considered as an organized political community under one government

• The notion of citizenship established through the Tanzimat decrees made the Ottoman Empire turn into a modern state.

• As early as the 1840s, peasants began asserting their newly acquired rights in local disputes.

• Along with new equal rights, new equal obligations were prescribed for all citizens.

• These new ties among citizens were also marked by the spread of market relations.
Greater Syria

- Greater Syria is the best example for how the spread of modern technologies and market relations can affect social, economic, and cultural space and pave the way for regional loyalties that would later provide the base for nationalist movements.

- Over the course of the 19th century, trade and infrastructural development established Greater Syria as a distinct economic unit.

- By 1861, the British-built telegraph connected Aleppo, Beirut, and Damascus.

- By the 1880s, a system of carriage roads connected the inland cities of Damascus and Homs with the coastal city of Tripoli, Sidon, and Beirut.

- By the 1890s, rail service connected Beirut with Damascus and Damascus with the grain-producing province of Hawran in the south.

- Commerce increasingly flowed along the lines of the new railroads and carriage roads.
• Urban-based merchants enriched by their commerce increasingly loaned money to and frequently repossessed the lands of peasants.

• Peasants increasingly swelled the population of the nearby cities in search of jobs in industries.

• Elite families in Damascus, Jerusalem, and Aleppo increasingly sought marriage alliances with their piers in Sidon, Nabulus, and Beirut supplementing commercial ties with family ties.

• All this contributed to the emergence of the Greater Syrian social and economic space.

• The evolution of Greater Syria as a distinct unit capable of inspiring loyalty would rouse later generations to champion the establishment of a greater Syrian state.

• NOTE: the economic, social, and cultural integration of a region does not necessarily mean that a nationalist movement will emerge there. For a nationalist movement to emerge, there must be nationalists to articulate its principles and mobilize the population for its goals.
Hejaz Railway ran from Damascus to Medina, through the Hejaz region of Arabia. It was part of the Ottoman railways network.

The railway had the religious purpose to aid the pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). However, most definitely, it also served to cement the Ottoman grip on the region and foster trade between Damascus and Medina.

The railway was started in 1900 at the behest of the Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II and was built largely by the Ottomans, with German advice and support.
The Hejaz railway is remarkable both for having had no debt when completed and for having many miles of track below sea-level. The initial declared goal of laying the tracks all the way to Mecca was never achieved. In fact it never reached further south than Medina (1908), 400 km (250 miles) short of Mecca.

The Hejaz railroad system was further expended and through extensions already by 1914 many other important cities were connected to it, like Aleppo, Tripoli, Haifa, Nabulus, etc.
Iraq

- As Greater Syria was emerging as a separate economic and social unit, so the connections between Greater Syria and the territories that are known today as Iraq loosened.

- By the beginning of the 20th century, little remained from the overland trade that had connected two regions in earlier centuries.

- After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, farmers of the upper Tigris valley began to ship grain via Persian Gulf to Europe. This allowed them to abandon less profitable market in geographic Syria.

- That did not matter very much to the Syrian economy since her rail connections and ports were wide-open and Syrian merchants could increase their profit margins by orienting to the Greater Syrian market or to the west.

- However, if the European powers did not object the establishment of the Bagdhad railway as much as they did, most probably the territories of modern-day Syria and Iraq would become one economic and possibly political unit.
Baghdad Railway
In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Ottoman Empire planned to construct a railway that would connect Istanbul with Baghdad via Aleppo. Having connected Aleppo with Damascus and the Hejaz Railway, a large part of the empire would be economically linked. Also, the pilgrimage from Istanbul and Baghdad to Mecca would be very much facilitated.

The Anatolian sections of the railroad were completed in 1896. The ambitious project was then formed to extend the railroad to Baghdad, and a company, again backed chiefly by German capital, was organized for the purpose.

The Germans were interested in the project, for the Baghdad Railway would basically connect Berlin via Istanbul (Bosphorus) with Baghdad and even further down with Basra (could be called 4B Railway).

This railway linkages would have facilitated the transportation of military supplies from Germany to a port on the Persian Gulf, from which the military supplies could be taken by ships to the farthest of the German colonies. The run home to Germany would supply oil to German industry. This unfettered access to resources would have been beneficial to German economic interests.
Baghdad Railway

- Immediate protests were made to the Ottoman Empire by France, Russia, and, particularly, Great Britain, which saw in the projected line a direct threat to its empire in India.

- Operations were held up for several years by the international pressure and by engineering difficulties, but in 1911 work was resumed.

- By playing on imperialistic rivalries, the construction of the railroad was a factor in bringing about World War I.

- In 1919, the Treaty of Versailles cancelled all German rights to the Baghdad Railway. However, the Deutsche Bank transferred its holdings to a Swiss bank.

- Governments in Turkey, Italy, France, and Britain reached several agreements which created various arrangements that gave a certain degree of control over the Baghdad Railway to various indistinct interests in those nations. Investors, speculators, and financiers were involved by 1923 in secretive and clandestine ways.
Baghdad Railway

• The British Army had completed the southeastern section from Baghdad to Basra, so that part was under British control. The French held negotiations to obtain some degree of control over the central portion of the railway, and Turkish interests controlled the oldest sections that had been constructed inside of Turkey but talks continued to be held after 1923.

• By the end of WWI, thus, only a stretch between Mosul and Samara remained to be completed on the main line of the railway, which Syria and Iraq later undertook and finished.

• The completion of the railroad between Bagdad and Damascus represented political closeness and economic rapprochement of the two Arab nations - Iraqis and Syrians.
Origins of Arab Nationalism

- Some historians trace the origins of the Arab nationalism to attempts made by the Young Turks to “turkify” the Ottoman Empire in the early 20th century. Because the Young Turks sought to make Turkish the official language of the empire and to eliminate non-Turks from the positions of authority, these historians claim, some in the empire became conscious of themselves as members of a distinct Arab nation and demanded the right to rule themselves.

- Other historians (like Turkish American scholar, Hasan Kayali) claim that the Young Turks (and their Committee for Union and Progress - CUP) “did not jeopardize the use of Arabic in the press, in primary education, or in matters pertaining to religion. The use of Ottoman in state institutions had a pragmatic goal consistent with the centralist agenda, which was supported by large sections of the Arabs.” Besides, these historians also assert that although all Arab supporters of Abdulhamid II were purged from the new administration, “a comparison of the 1877–78 and 1908 Parliaments does not show a relative decline in the size of Arab representation.”
Origins of Arab Nationalism

• These latter scholars conclude that

• "the predominant sentiment among the Arabs of the Ottoman Empire in the Young Turk period favored allegiance to the Ottoman sultan and remaining as an integral part of the Islamic empire, even though demands for decentralization within this framework were voiced more and more loudly. Notions of Arab independence that had been current but not popular since the second half of the nineteenth century gained strength at times of unsuccessful foreign entanglements of the Ottoman government, because of a desire to mitigate the impact of probable foreign hegemony following a breakdown of the Ottoman state.

• As early as 1878, when Russian armies came within miles of Istanbul, several groups — Christian and Muslim — in Syria called for Syrian independence. Similarly, in 1912 Ottoman involvement in wars against a coalition of powerful Balkan states fueled the propensity for independence in Beirut, Damascus, and Basra. Such stirrings frequently received European backing.
Origins of Arab Nationalism

• Finally, during World War I Sharif Husayn’s conviction that rendering support to the Ottoman government against the British would result in the political demise of his dynastic family and the encouragement he received from segments of a disintegrated Arab elite in the rest of the empire initiated the Arab Revolt.

• This showdown in a side theater, with active British support, contributed to the separation of the Arab regions from the empire and, under the new geopolitical realities of foreign occupation, prepared the ground for the rise of particularistic nationalist movements in Anatolia and the Fertile Crescent.