

Question: **Is nationalism an anachronism or a liberating force?**

1. **Definition:**

- a) **Feeling of belonging** to a community united by common ties
e.g. language, religion, history, culture
- b) **Ideology** – nation = ideal form of government with an overriding claim to the loyalty of its citizens – therefore it determines:
 - (i) **kind of government** – authoritarian and totalitarian
-- natural leader = 'infallible pointsman' (Koestler)
 - (ii) **relation between individual and government** – sacrifice of rights to national cause and the leader – freedom is the recognition of necessity (Hegel) – destiny of the nation determined by laws of history

2. **Anachronistic or modern?**

a) **Anachronistic:**

- (i) seeks to establish identity (**pre-political homogeneity**) in historical roots -- many = spurious e.g. Aryan
 - I. **Language** – to achieve feelings of identity must express it in common language – but
 - origins of language = complex – absorbing different cultural influences
 - international languages – French, Spanish, English
 - II. **Race** – origins frequently spurious e.g. German mythology of race + based on pseudo-scientific theory:
 - genetically nations = too complex and racial purity = impractical without repression – assumption that racial group should coincide with political nation has resulted in inhumane transfer of whole communities
e.g. Nazism and transport of Jews to Poland
 - II. **Historical or natural frontiers** – political nation should coincide with traditional frontiers that existed centuries ago:

Problems:

- historical accounts are never uncontested
- modern migration -- therefore no longer traditional homogeneous communities within traditional frontiers

III. Religion:

- in most nations a range of different religions
- decline of religious observance in modern age

IV. Historical consciousness/culture:

- historical origins = often spurious e.g. Aryan culture and history
- modern communities contain many national groups with different historical consciousness and culture, because revolution in cheap and efficient transport
- communications and international sources of news, information and entertainment – mass media, movies, satellite television

- (ii) seeks to create feeling of community typical of **pre-industrial age** therefore = anachronistic longing for an idealised past:
- runs counter to global trends in modern economic and technological development = towards international co-operation, 'globalisation'
 - e.g. World Bank, IMF, European Union, UN

b) **Modern:**

- (i) emphasizes importance of **modern symbols** of national grandeur:
- e.gs. HE dams and massive capital projects
 - e.gs. China, Egypt, India
 - Nuclear weapons

- (ii) nationalist movements associate themselves with **symbols of dynamism and youth:**

e.gs. 'Young Italy', 'Young Ireland', 'Young Turks', 'Young Arabism'

- argument = need to rejuvenate nation and society to free it from enthrallment to colonial nations

3. Liberating or tyrannizing?

a) **Associated with democracy:**

Claim = self-determination of the nation will lead to self-determination for the individual

(i) liberation from **autocratic regimes:**

e.g. 1959 Cuba -- Batista

(ii) **Colonial nationalism** – liberation from imperialism:

e.g. 1948 India – British Rule

1970s & 80s Black Consciousness movement in South Africa

(iii) **Pan movements** – liberation from economic/cultural imperialism of the West + to counter global influence of superpowers:

e.g. Pan African Movement – Organisation of African Unity
Pan Arabism – the Arab League

(iv) Autonomy and **cultural identity:**

-- aim to preserve cultural identity from dominance of more powerful cultures e.g.s. Scottish, Welsh, Basque nationalism

b) **Undemocratic** and tyrannizes minorities:

(i) **Language:**

-- in some Asian and African states (e.g. Nigeria) have many languages and in many states more than one
-- therefore 'official' language discriminates against minorities who speak other languages
e.g. the teaching of Afrikaans in SA schools

(ii) **Race:**

-- frequently leads to discrimination and when allied with policies to maintain purity it can lead to repression:

I. Inhumane **forced migration** to unravel racial mix

e.g. South Africa – migration of blacks into 'Bantustans'
(homelands)
-- Pass Laws

II. Policies to prevent **racial intermarriage/interbreeding**

e.g. Nuremberg Laws 1935
Segregation policies – South Africa, USA

III. **Racial discrimination** – denial of human and civil rights to minority races

(iii) **Historical or natural frontiers:**

-- geographical and historical concerns given precedence over democratic opinion

I. **Forced migration**

e.g. 1930s Germany – 'Lebensraum' – transportation of Jews

II. **Irredentism** – at expense of popular will

e.g. 1938 Sudetenland
1982 The Falklands
Campaign by Spanish nationalists to regain Gibraltar

(iv) **Religion:**

I. Discrimination against minority religions

II. Transfer of whole communities

e.g. 1947 India and Pakistan

(v) **Ideology** of nationalism:

I. Used as mere **rhetoric** to enhance autocratic power of an elite – a means of mass mobilisation:

'a form of self-expression by which a certain kind of political excitement can be communicated from an elite to the masses.'

Kenneth Minogue

'Whenever a single definite object is made the supreme end of the State ... the State becomes for a time inevitably absolute.'

Lord Acton

II. Autocratic/Totalitarian:

-- claim to sweep away traditional limited forms of government -- Carl Schmitt 'total identity state'

A. Symbolism of nationalism – family and the head of the family = the father figure who can and frequently does become a dictator

e.g. Soviet Union and Nazi Germany

B. Organic concept of the nation – idea of nation as a living organism with its own rights and existence independent of individuals -- interest of nation = above the individual

'The co-existence of several nations under the same State is a test as well as the best security of its freedom.'

Lord Acton

III. Inflames emotions and encourages fanatical commitment

v. a will to compromise:

-- 20th C nationalism = major contributor to development of imperialism and world conflict

Therefore after the Second World War attempts to defuse the influence of nationalism via nations sacrificing some sovereignty to international organisations

e.g. UNO, NATO, European Union

IV. Promotes only the freedom of nationalist group at cost of others:

e.g. The Aryan race in Nazi Germany

The rise of the Broederbond in South Africa