Nationalism: Theories and Cases

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‘A major contribution to the growing literature on nations and nationalism. Seeking to look beyond the primordial/modernist debate and to expand the discussion beyond the boundaries of the state, Harris emphasizes that the functions performed by nationalism have changed over time. Harris's Nationalism is an imaginative treatment of an important subject, and full of insights. It should prove useful for both specialists and students alike.’ - Sabrina P. Ramet, Norwegian University of Science & Technology, Trondheim, Norway.

This highly original contribution to studies of nationalism focuses on its ideological foundations, tracing its historical beginnings and charting its varied manifestations in world politics today.

Its broad theoretical and empirical inquiry explores the dynamics of nationalism and its theories and also considers the role of 'the nation' in political processes taking place beyond states. In addition to a wide-ranging review of traditional approaches to nationalism, this book is unique in its broad geographic and historical scope and in the appraisal of these approaches in contemporary international politics, including developments such as the increased role of non-state actors, regional integration, trans-national movements and diasporas.

A key element of the book is its case studies which range from the rise of national movements within the old Empires to contemporary ethnic conflicts, and which allow for a clearer understanding of the politics of nationalism, how its theories can be applied and which urge some searching questions about 'new' forms of ethno-national mobilization.

Key Features

- Only book to cover both historical and contemporary theories of nationalism
- Reviews classical theories of nationalism
- Shows nationalism to be integral to all political changes and demonstrates its relevance to democracy and globalisation
- Uses examples and case studies to demonstrate application of theories of nationalism in world politics
- Links classical and 'new' nationalism - continuities and discontinuities between the 'old' and current understandings of nationalism are highlighted
He evades obvious difficulties presented by pre-independence African nationalisms by minimizing the role of territorial movements, and explaining them as the application to the balkanised colonies of one, solidary ethnic movement along colour lines, i.e. pan-Africanism. There is considerable historical truth in this account (cf. Legum, C., Pan-Africanism, London, Pall Mall, 1965) but I feel that Rotberg's sociological explanation in terms of the colony-generated solidarities provides a more adequate explanation of the form, and much of the content, of African nationalisms. This verifies that nationalism-centric abrasive foreign policy can disrupt global security and cooperation. How? The post-World War Two concept of strategic restraint is the foundation for the current global order, concerning international governance. Primarily, the concept of nationalism will be discussed in historical and theoretical detail, followed by a range of global examples that threatens global security. Secondly, various factors through which nationalism holds a significant level of influence will be assessed and further contextualised, including a critical discussion of their main features and implications each with brief conclusions that relate to nationalism. The specificity of the case studies used to generate theories of nationalism also served as a bias, due to the difficulty inherent in a universal theory of defining the nation derived from unique and specific cases. Outsider perspectives of migrant and transnational scholars also influenced their work. Personal experiences with nationalist and primordialist forces served to further push scholars to the constructivist camp. Additionally, nationalist and anti-nationalist political climates in the scholars' home countries influenced their level of antagonism towards the mythologizing of the nation and the conservative primordialist school of thought. The constructivist school of thought is in no way a uniform reaction to the jingoist nationalism of primordialist thinkers. The older modernization theories generally saw nationalism as a functional substitute for local communities, religions, and other sources of identity and security that were necessarily disrupted by the larger scale, greater individualism, and more rapid social change of modernity (Geertz 1963, Gellner 1964, Hayes 1966). In both cases, historical narratives are mobilized to underpin the nationalist myths. The French narrative traces the nation to a modern act of founding by its members, people who were not constituted properly as French (rather than Provencal or Beamaise, Protestant or Catholic) until that radically novel founding. Keywords: nationalism, modernist theories of nationalism, modernity, modernization, national commitment, multiculturalism. However, the common feature of nationalism as deprivation theories and the ethnonationalist mystique they criticize is the positioning of nationalism as irrational (Smith, 2003). In both cases the two values go together, and this result of the research is more accurately explained by the concept of modernization than by the theory of nationalism as an antidemocratic ideology, which is not empirically supported in its main part. The next set of theories of nationalism stems from the notion of nationalism as general value orientation, which cannot be wholly placed within political or any other specific sphere of society.