

## Nationalism: Summary of Presentation

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### Firstly: What is nationalism

- It is important to understand that ‘nationalism’ is largely a culturally created ‘mythology’, as opposed to an objective feature of international relations. The essential features of ‘nationalism’ are largely fluid and subjective; they are not therefore considered to be intrinsically inclusive to all types of nationalism. However, some examples **according to Hroch** may include;

A shared language, a shared ancestry or common ‘ethnicity’, national mythologies, Historic kingdoms or affiliations e.g. Magyar Kingdom, Greater Serbia, political or social traditions, national costumes, National dishes, the religious affiliation of a population e.g. Poland’s historical and cultural relationship with the Roman Catholic Church.

So what types of Nationalism are there, as I said it’s a fluid phenomenon?

- **Irredentalist nationalism**:- a form of nationalism that promotes the annexation of territories or states which have or have had members of a national group residing within them historically. Ramet, - ‘Greater Serbia’. Perhaps most evidently Hitler’s lebensraum foreign policy, restoring the Sudetenland to the Germanic peoples. In very **classical realist** terms: Its often linked to the ulterior motive of a lust for power or restoration of pride. It is a raw emotion that makes a society vulnerable to nationalist mobilisation: as illustrated by Milosevic who whipped up passion to a vulnerable populace.
- **Ethnic-nationalism and Eastern Europe**: For the purposes of an analysis of ‘nationalism’ as a powerful historical, political and social force in EE, it is perhaps most useful to focus on the issue of ‘ethnic nationalism’. Ethnic nationalism is primarily based on the hereditary connections of people. Ethnic nationalism specifically seeks to unite all people of a certain ethnic heritage together. Consequently, ethnic nationalism sharpens the “**we-they antagonism**”

This phenomenon remains ever potent in Europe and that’s why the foundation of the ‘**European project**’: the idea that these European nations could be combined into a single economic regime and that that economic regime would or could mature into a single united political entity is, on reflection, a **quite extraordinary idea**.

Why is this? Well, Europeans still of course, do not think of themselves as Mediterranean or Northern European. They think of themselves as Greek or Spanish, Danish or French. Europe is divided into nations, and for most Europeans, identification with their particular nation comes first. This is deeply embedded in European history. For the past two centuries, the European obsession has been the nation. First, the Europeans tried to separate their own nations from the **multinational dynastic empires** that had treated European nations as mere possessions of the **Hapsburg, Bourbon or Romanov families**.

- Following this, Europe’s future was dealt a terribly cruel hand from the outcome of Wilsonian idealism following WW1. He preached **self determination**, one of the principles of his 14 points. **Self determination** allows the freedom of the people of a given territory or **national grouping** to determine their own political status and how they will be governed without undue influence from any other country. Unfortunately, this rather liberal Kantian ideal - would open up a Pandora’s box of problems.
- Just to mention a few statistics: **The Versailles settlement and Trianon Agreement**, left 30,000,000 people in states in which they were not part of the dominant nationality. Germany and Hungary in terms of annexation: Suffered most. Poland granted access to the Baltic Sea (Polish Corridor); Hungarian empire substantially dissected losing (1/3) of its territory and population. A club of multiethnic nations were forced together to form Yugoslavia, as was Czechoslovakia.
- In theory: possibly a liberating, quite outstanding ideal. But in practice **FLAWED**. Wilson advocated the agglomeration of people who spoke the same language, a criteria that was not suitable in EE, where race, religion and language were all seen as constants determining nationality. **As Fawn states** ‘you’re either Polish or you not.’

- As **Winston Churchill** said: “*Ancient poets and theologians could not imagine such suffering, which Trianon brought to the innocent.*”
- These treaties, still today are a cause for individuals to harbor national resentment for the historical injustices.

## **Great Power Clash**

Essentially, the international system witnessed during these treaties and indeed after with the rise of the Soviet power and Nazism, **the impact of Great Powers Politics at the systemic level**. Indeed the ‘notions’ that were advocated by the treaties only came to function if it was in the interest of the allies. Hungary – mutual plebiscites did not take place throughout the empire; it was dissected in very structural realist terms, to reduce the relative power of a potential ally to Germany, profoundly shifting the balance of power in the allies favor. The Sudetenland (German majority) was essentially **allocated** to Czechoslovakia, another example of quite drastic action, that in no way reflected ‘true self determination’.

**As Huntington states:** Essentially they had been **pawns** in the obsession with ‘Great power politics’ and the ‘balance of power’ which had left a cruel and embittered CE with little prospect for future understanding.

I think **Thucydides** surmise my point clearly: **the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must**

Ultimately in the short term:

Repercussions of the treaties illustrated through **Hitlers Lebensraum policy**: a promise to overturn the Treaty of Versailles. Such a policy was widely heralded throughout Germany. An example of irredentalist nationalism.

After the Cold War, immediately a sense of triumph and hope shook international relations. **Francis Fukuyama** proclaimed “The triumph of liberalism”, Bush senior “The beginning of a new, peaceful world order”.

In contrast realist scholars such as **Mearsheimer** refuted such claims: in the article “**Back to the Future**” “The claim realism has bitten the dust is simply wrong”. Why, without going into much detail, the balance of power shift from a bi-polar to multi polar world would elevate the negative consequences of anarchy. He actually argued, in quite Hobbesian thought that the SU through the Brezhnev doctrine acted as a safeguard against ethnic nationalism and anarchy boiling over – most potently through coercion. Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia, Poland 1980s martial law. Without the SU – hyper nationalism will increase.

This is most profoundly illustrated through the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia and peaceful split of Czechoslovakia. Comparatively, why were the two dissolutions so different? Why did one negotiate around the round table and other at the barrel of a gun? Very crucially due to time ill include the main

- Both entities had similar historical roots: both federations were composed of artificial boundaries along ethnic lines resulting from disintegrated Empires; both emerged as voluntary unions of association; and both had recently emerged from the imposition of Communist rule.

### **Yet most crucially:**

- Huntington had warned that Yugoslavia had an overwhelming and even overbearing number of cultures, languages and religious in such a confined space – and this would be the most dangerous threat to a stable Europe: talking about ethnic problems along civilisational fault lines. Although Czechoslovakia did too, demographically the two republics of Czech and Slovak were relatively homeogenous. Where as in Yugoslavia there was a profound mixing of the races. This, compounded by the Serbian ‘irredentalist ambitions’ for a ‘greater Serbia’, at a time when economic hardship was rife: enabled Milosevic to arguably tap into the raw emotion of the Serb who felt aggrieved and vulnerably by Yugoslavia’s internal collapse and thus he could whip up nationalism.

Europe:

**In addition and I think it is now important to raise the point:** Czechoslovakian and of course the Visegrad states potential nationalist aspirations were initially contained by this desire to ‘shed the Eastern Europe attachment’ that many people felt had been forced onto them by the Soviet Union and get back into Europe ‘**Back home**’ for many. I think this belief and hope played a key role into why the 1989 revolutions are remembered as “**velvet**”.

Way to do this was via NATO which after the CW remolded itself to become an alliance based on democratic principles. It was seen as a step, a platform to meeting the stringent criteria of European membership set by the **Copenhagen treaty**.

The Central European accession into the EU curbed nationalist ambitions because of the EU’s considerable **soft power influence, the allure of a liberalized bloc, free trade zone, freedoms of people** advocacy of Human Rights. Indeed the EU was referred to as the Carrot, tempting nations seeking prosperity to join.

- This however, has not wiped away nationalist feeling in Central Europe. **Indeed, I recently saw posters in Budapest for the aptly named ‘Yobic’ far right movement.** The Hungarian official position emulates their role as a kin and national state. The Hungarian government states that “it is the constitutional duty of the Hungarian government to take responsibility for Hungarians beyond the border.
- In the **Czech Republic too Fawn states:** Czech antipathy towards Romanies... indicates a taint of intolerance and a hole in the velvet of the new political creed. This episode... illustrates that Czech values of tolerance and inclusiveness do not extend through society
- George Leaman goes so far as to state; “We are witnessing the restoration of political tribalism in Europe”.

***Hroch compares nationalism to some kind of epidemic disease, which can be treated and has to be treated; the problem is finding the right medicine. My personal position is that this medicine will continue to elude us for some time. WHY?***

When the Greek financial crisis emerged, other Europeans asked the simple question, “What has this to do with me?” From their point of view, the Greeks were foreigners. They spoke a different language, had a different culture, shared a different history.

Ultimately in many parts of Europe, the EU remains an abstraction. National sovereignty: particularly during difficult times swipes aside the influential carrot that is the EU. Thus im saying the EU and its values can curb nationalism; yet in times of difficulty, the reversion towards blaming another and finding solidarity with your nation state remains ever prominent, thus the EU alone cannot control resurgent nationalism unless the ‘social mindset’ of identity, that Alexander Wendt talks about is changed. Indeed this constructivist take is the principle ‘antidote’ to the nationalist problem: nationalism is a social construction that is fluid and evolving. Cultures too are dynamic. An EU or more solidarist mindset needs to be taken if we are to greatly curb nationalism in times of difficulty; a step that I feel is difficult:

Summary Point:

- Despite genocide, forced movement, disease and ethnic-dilution over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the ‘diversity’ of EE and her diasporas remains a consistent and ‘sad feature’ of the region.

- This is why we need to know and learn our history and remember just how bad times were during the last century in Europe, far worse than today. For instance: George Orwell said "*He who controls the past controls the future*".
- The nationalist road is not one to take.