

Evolution Of Nation And Nationalism Through The View Point Of Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner And Rabindranath Tagore

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Abstract

The condition of nation and nationalism is observed from a critical viewpoint since it states inherent feelings of devotion and admiration towards one's nation. The ideology of nationalism is often seen in terms of certain theoretical approaches propounded by several national theorists and political philosophers. Considering this, the current study puts forward a detailed understanding of three major theorists, such as Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Rabindranath Tagore in terms of evolution of nationalism. Furthermore, the prospect of nationalism according to the mentioned thinkers is seen as such; a nation which constitutes an imagined community, one that is based on industrial society and impression of universal humanism on nationalism.

Keywords: Imagined Communities, horizontal comradeship, Industrialism, Universal humanism, nationalism

Introduction

The description of a nation strictly follows a political identity wherein the territorial state is governed by a political system for the betterment of society. In compliance with this, the term nationalism is viewed as an ideology where one places their devotion and allegiance to the nation above all. Following this, the present paper develops an analysis of the evolution of nation and nationalism through the lens of Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Rabindranath Tagore.

Background

The inception of nationalistic fervour is often witnessed to give rise to feelings of nationalism and patriotism among the masses. With respect to nationalism, the concept of one's nation comes to the forefront which showcases its superiority above others. This nature of superiority dwelling in individuals is responsible to develop the ideology of nationalism wherein an entire society upholds the values, culture, ethnicities, language and other factors at the highest level as opposed to other countries. As per the opinions of Goswami (2020), it has been witnessed that the formation of imagined communities in Benedict Anderson's theory is quite applicable in recent times. In other words, contemporary society feels an inclination toward the convictions of the imagined community since the nation-state is evolving through the application of digital media and social media. It has been ascertained that Anderson's disposition is linked with the initiation of print media in a society that has rendered feelings of collectivism among the population (Antonsich et al. 2020).

Furthermore, theories of Anderson strongly showcased nationalism as a positive force in comparison to Ernest Gellner's. The latter focused on the transformation of society via industrialism. As stated by Kradin (2022), Ernest's political philosophy has been associated with a state that shares one particulate language, religion and others that are common among the general citizen. This in turn paves the pathway to change an agrarian society and alter the dynamics of the nation-state by centrally positioning industrialism around it. On the contrary, the proposition of the noble laureate; Rabindranath Tagore, has significantly outlined traces of humanity within nationalism (Dasthakur, 2020). In layman's terms, Tagore's fervour of nationalism is inherently rooted in the condition of being human first, thereby; humanism is the ultimate bases of nationalism.

Aim and Objectives

Aim

The paper aims to assess the progression of the concepts of nation and nationalism based on the understanding of Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Rabindranath Tagore and evaluates the interconnections among the theories.

Objectives

- To identify the traces of nationalism in theories of Benedict Anderson's Imagined Community
- To evaluate the prospects of nationalism in Ernest Gellner's nationalistic approach
- To outline the fundamentals of universal humanism in Rabindranath Tagore's notion of nationalism
- To showcase the similarities and polarities between the theories of Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Rabindranath Tagore's concepts of nationalism

Research Questions

RQ1: In which manner does traces of nationalism is observed in Benedict Anderson's Imagined Community?

RQ2: In what ways does Ernest Gellner reconstruct prospects of nationalism in his nationalistic approach?

RQ3: How does Rabindranath Tagore bring forward the fundamentals of universal humanism in his theories of nationalism?

RQ4: What are the similarities and polarities between the underpinning theories of nationalism in Anderson, Gellner and Tagore's understanding?

Literature Review

Benedict Anderson's Creation of Imagined Communities

The initiation of imagined communities is observed from a historical viewpoint wherein the nationalist thinker; Benedict Anderson has replaced America in place of Europe at the focal point of its context analysis. According to the philosopher, nationalism achieved its realm during the 18th and 19th centuries in the United States (US), other Latin-Spanish colonies and Brazil.

According to the arguments of Anderson (2020), the inception of nationalism took place with the emergence of capitalism in society. Furthermore, the aspect of the imaginary nation-state resonates with an image that the majority of citizens have in their minds regarding their fellow communion. In other words, most citizens have never come across each other, and the probability to meet is quite low, however, this image of communion is stemmed from that of print media (Syahputra & Mahdiana, 2019; Duara, 2021). The most vital reason behind this observation is linked with the creation of newspapers, which is the print media that put focuses on producing mass vernacular newspapers. This creation of vernacular print media is ascertained to be one of the driving forces behind the sharing of a similar experience. Concerning this, the imagined community dwells on the imagination that irrespective of geographical, racial, cultural and other differences, readers are sharing a common experience of readership; therefore, a collective spirit develops.

As stated by Maxwell (2020), the theories of Anderson differed from that of the primordial origin of the nation. The primordial notion postulates that nation-states are not a by-product of imagined communities; it is majorly an outcome of long-lasting ancient entities. Therefore, nations are conceived because of ancient properties that have existed for decades prior to the introduction of modernity and capitalist society. Furthermore, the principal agent driving Anderson's engine of imagined community is grounded in horizontal comradeship. Speaking from the philosopher's view, a nation is imagined therefore, the emergence of a community occurs (Bjelić, 2022). Following this, this imagined community discards facets of inequality and other forms of existing exploitation since the country is ascertained to be a deep, horizontal comradeship. Thus, it is this deep comradeship for the nation that dwells feelings of nationalism among the masses despite suffering from inequalities and sectional divisions; where individuals are equipped to die willingly for the imagined community.

Theoretical understanding of nation and nationalism following Ernest Gellner's approach

Considering Ernest's disposition toward nationalism; this is observed in light of industrialism. The foremost belief of Gellner is understood in terms of mobilising society through the initiation of industrialism. As argued by Weitz (2020), the transformation of a nation from an agrarian society to a full-scale industrialised society

has significant benefits. It is because of industrialism that barriers are observed to be removed between sectional communities because of mass education. This standardised mass education is essential to uplift society altogether and create a new space for economic progression and societal development. However, Gellner's belief is formulated on the grounds of two major probabilities; such as assimilation and an absence of assimilation among the differing communities (Khazanov, 2022). The process of assimilation is achievable through standardised education in case both sections of the community share a similar culture and speak a common language. On the other hand, a lack of ethnicity (shared culture, language) among the different communities is responsible for failure in assimilation. Thereby, Gellner advocates that surges of nationalism would be witnessed as the excluded ethnicity which brings forward notions of political sovereignty.

As pointed out by Uherek (2022), the primary belief of Gellner's nationalism revolves around the notion of one culture imposed within one state. According to this statement, it can be ascertained that the imposition of a common ethnicity is critical for the successful implementation of nationalism among the masses. Thereby, the structure of Ernest Gellner's theoretical approach is linked with nationalism as the highest form of a society's culture wherein it discards the existence of multiculturalism.

Critical appraisal of Universal Humanism observed in Tagore's foundation of Nationalism

Following the traditional notion of nationalism as per the noble laureate, it is derived from the phase nation-state that is an amalgamation of Western concepts of capitalism and mechanisation. As opined by Lamba (2022), Tagore's take on nationalism is seen to be anti-Indian since he considered the principles of capitalism and mechanisation to be against the principles of Indian civilisation. In other words, it can be said that the roots of Tagore's nationalism are fundamentally correlated with facets of humanism. It is his eternal belief that universal humanism is the foremost significant priority that needs to be placed in the heart of people. Considering India's diverse nature wherein several religious beliefs and cultural plurality exist, therefore, the machinery of nationalism is supported through feelings of humanity. In compliance with this, his renowned novel; *The Home and The World* also known as *Ghare Baire* showcases the dangerous impact of nationalistic fervour claiming the form of

ethno religious violence (Acharya, 2020; Karmakar, 2021; Shani, 2022). Ghare Baire reflects the destruction of society because of communal hatred that is spread through the wings of nationalism and attempts to dismantle community associations. According to the observations of Puri (2022), the religion of Tagore is inherently associated with that of humanity. Therefore, the prospects of nation and nationalism are linked with the bases of being human in place of stirring communal hatred and religious violence in the name of nationalism.

Theory

Primordialist and Sociobiological Theories

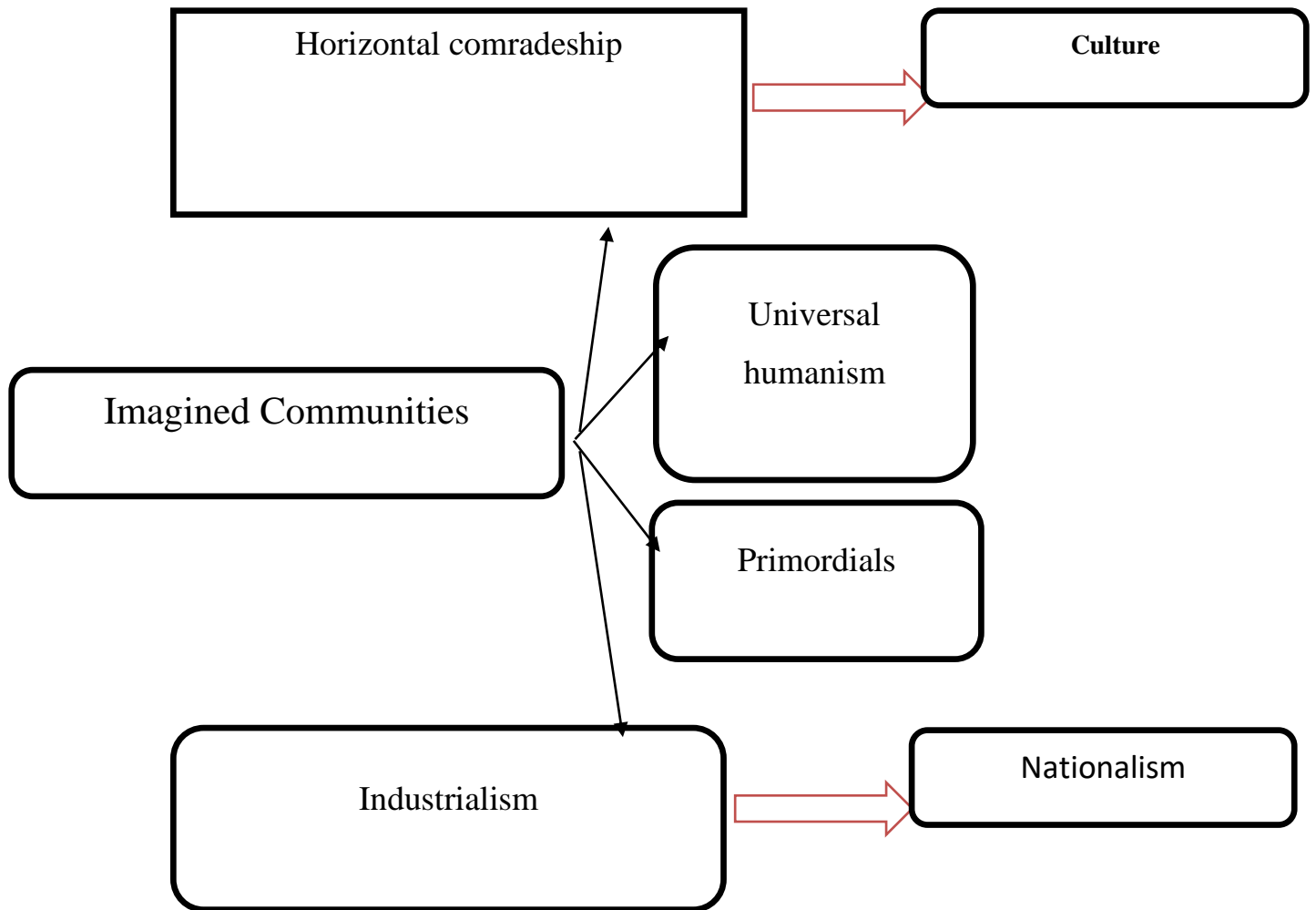
This above-stated theory is the foremost vital concept existing in the history of Universalist theories. In terms of primordialism, the primary concern is group identity which is considered a given factor. This further state, group identity is an inherent aspect that is observed within every society which is linked through blood, racial background, linguistics group, and many more. The sociobiological approach puts human behaviour under the lens of three vital aspects, namely; kin selection, reciprocity and coercion. This approach showcases that in-groups and out-groups exist because of the diverging existences of various ethnic groups. Thereby, an amalgamation of these two concepts gives rise to ancient entities which is the primordial belief whereas several ethnic groups are responsible to unite and different individuals.

Literature Gap

It is seen that notions of the nation are the underlying factor which gives rise to nationalism. However, it is witnessed that nationalism varies because of different theories which have been absent from the reviewed articles. The mentioned philosophers and thinkers have presented their respective understanding of nationalism, although, cases of similarities and polarities are missing. Furthermore, nationalism theories need to showcase the development of society, however, an intensification of communal violence takes place which is absent from the readings of Anderson and Gellner.

Imagined Communities, horizontal comradeship, Industrialism, Universal humanism, nationalism

Conceptual Framework



Methodology

The reconstruction of society as a whole has majorly relied on cases of nationalism since it incorporates devoting aspects among the public. In order to instil nationalism it is foremost essential to change the grounds of a society thereby, the progression of the country takes place. Following the statements of Go & Watson (2019), anti-communalism and anti-socialism can be driven out by the engagement of nationalism. In association with the author's comment, the core fundamentals of nation and nationalism are centred on the spirit of collectivism shared by the common masses and inherent dedication towards one's nation's culture, linguistics, and other facets.

Discussion

There are a series of issues that occur within differing individuals, given their cultural, ethnic, and religious beliefs are linked with different walks of life. Speaking in a general sense, nationalism is the most effective instrument in bringing together individuals that share a common thought and have an indebted allegiance to their country (Schwartz, 2021). Furthermore, it is seen that capitalism put print media in direct light which has been a significant factor since publishing houses back in the 18th century started with the idea of capitalism. As stated by Brilmyer et al. (2019), this notion has been positioned by Anderson in his approach to nationalism which created a new direction. On the other hand, Ernest believed in the nature of industrialism which is accountable to create a mobilised society that has economic growth Tagore's belief is strictly related to humanity which is essential to discard notions of ethno religious violence and communal hatred.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that nationalism arises from the basis of nation-state which incorporates certain specific beliefs such as capitalism, industrialism, modernism and many more. Oftentimes it has been seen that nationalism and patriotism often overlap, albeit the former represents exalting one's country above all in terms of advocating cultural and ethnic notions. Thereby, in association with the present study, Anderson, Gellner and Tagore has offered respective opinions and theoretical concepts of nation and nationalism. Furthermore, it can be seen that the primary structuring of nationalism is connected with the development of society that is inclusive of all communities.

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