

ESSAYS  
ON  
NATIONALISM

.

BY  
CARLTON J. H. HAYES  
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY IN COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

New York  
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1926

*All rights reserved*

COPYRIGHT, 1926,  
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

---

Set up and electrotyped.  
Published April, 1926

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BY  
THE BERWICK & SMITH CO.

ESSAYS ON NATIONALISM

By CARLTON J. H. HAYES

---

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR

A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF MODERN EUROPE

Volume I. 1500-1815

Volume II. 1815-1924

MODERN HISTORY

(In collaboration with Parker T. Moon)



TO  
E. C. H.

## CONTENTS

ESSAYS	PAGE
I. WHAT IS NATIONALISM? . . . . .	1
II. THE RISE OF NATIONALISM . . . . .	30
III. THE PROPAGATION OF NATIONALISM . . . . .	61
IV. NATIONALISM AS A RELIGION . . . . .	93
V. NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONAL WAR . . . . .	126
VI. NATIONALISM AND MILITARISM . . . . .	156
VII. NATIONALISM AND INTOLERANCE . . . . .	196
VIII. NATIONALISM—CURSE OR BLESSING? . . . . .	245
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE . . . . .	277

# ESSAYS ON NATIONALISM

## I

### WHAT IS NATIONALISM?

#### 1

THE most significant emotional factor in public life to-day is nationalism. Of the current age it is the mark at once intense and universal.

Look you at the state of popular feeling in France in respect of Germany, or in Germany in respect of France; look you at the zeal of the Italians for the newer, greater Italy, at the enthusiasm of the Poles for a Poland restored and unified, at the determination of a Turkey for and by the Turks. Observe the outcome of the latest and greatest war in human annals: on one hand, the smashing of the non-national empires of the Tsars, the Habsburgs, and the Sultans, and, on the other, the building of the sovereign independence and national unity of Czechoslovakia, of Esthonia, of Finland, of Greece, of Latvia, of Lithuania, of Rumania, of Yugoslavia. Note the patriotic ardour of Englishmen in behalf of the British Empire and the no less nationalist reaction against it of Irishmen, East Indians, and Egyptians. Perceive in the United States the pursuit of a policy of national isolation, the heightening tariff, the increasing restrictions on foreign immigration, the picturesque activities of citizens in masks and nightgowns, the vogue of Americanism and Americanisation.

Study the sentimental background of diplomatic intrigues, competitive armaments, and economic rivalries, not only in general as abstract causes of hypothetical war, but specifically as concrete predisposing causes of the late

World War and as definite motive forces in contemporary international tensions, exemplified most pertinently perhaps in the strains and stresses of Americo-Japanese relations. The background of all these things and of much else is nationalism. Hardly a cloud appears nowadays on the horizon of domestic politics, social action, and international affairs, which is without a lining of nationalism. This fact should at once be obvious, though some painful reflection may be required to determine whether the lining be of silver or of brass.

## 2

Peculiar difficulties confront the student who essays to deal with the impressive and vital phenomenon of nationalism. There has been, especially of late, a good deal of "popular" writing on various aspects of it, and several scholarly treatises have recently dealt with its history among particular peoples, but no profound systematic treatment of the whole subject—the nature and history of patriotism, nationality, and nationalism—exists in any language.<sup>1</sup> To undertake such a treatment would be, of course, a gigantic task: one would have to know a vast amount of history, and history of ideas quite as much as of actions; further, since patriotism is a matter more of feeling than of thought, one would have to be trained in social psychology as well as in philosophy and history; and, finally, alas, before one could advance into the very heart of contemporary nationalism one would be forced to traverse the wide fields and devious paths of anthropology. Small wonder that publicists have bungled and professors have been afraid! Lacking scientific investigation and scholarly analysis, the phenomenon appears vague and intangible and mysterious. There is no agreement as to precisely what it is or as to whether it is good or bad, transitory or eternal.

Reluctance to deal adequately with nationalism is ascrib-

<sup>1</sup> See the Bibliographical Note, Appendix, p. 277, below.



able not only to the complexity of source-materials and the paucity of scientific treatments but also to the deep and powerful emotions with which the whole subject is charged. Nationalism touches all manner of current popular prejudices—personal, national, religious, and racial—and he who would expose the mainsprings of nationalist thought and action must guard particularly against his own emotional bias and at the same time face courageously the distrust and opposition of a large number of his fellows whose own manifold prejudices are enshrined in a collective herd-prejudice. It is almost inevitable that thoughtless persons—the bulk of mankind—should accuse the thoughtful national critic of being an “internationalist” or a “radical,” an “anarchist” or a “bolshivist”; at least they will call him “unpatriotic.” And what sane man likes to be called unpatriotic? The flushed faces of those who resent imputations upon contemporary forms of patriotism and the cold shivers which run up and down the spine of him who is denounced for making such imputations, are the most eloquent tributes to the strength and force of nationalist feeling. They are the most difficult hurdles in the course of the scholarly study of the phenomenon of nationalism.

A minor difficulty, but a troublesome one, must be dealt with at the outset of our study. I refer to the different and sometimes conflicting uses and connotations of the words “nation,” “nationality,” “nationalism,” and “patriotism.” Yet, if we are to comprehend and eventually to judge the phenomena which these words express, we must seek some mutual understanding of what they mean and how they are related one to another. We must endeavour to assign to them fairly precise definitions, no matter how tentative or arbitrary such definitions may be. We must speak the same language and employ the same terms in the same sense.

The word “nation” is tantalisingly ambiguous. It is an old word and has gathered much moss with the lapse of

centuries. As derived from the Latin "natio" it meant birth or race and signified a tribe or social grouping based on real or fancied community of blood and possessed presumably of unity of language. Later it was used in certain mediaeval universities to designate a division of students for voting purposes according to their place of birth.<sup>1</sup> Edmund Spenser in the *Faery Queen* spoke of a "nation of birds"; Ben Jonson styled physicians "a subtile nation"; and Samuel Butler referred to lawyers as "too wise a nation t' expose their trade to disputation." Since the seventeenth century "nation" has been employed by jurists and publicists to describe the population of a sovereign political state, regardless of any racial or linguistic unity, and this description still enjoys general sanction. Thus, not only the relatively homogeneous peoples of Denmark and Portugal are called nations, but the polyglot peoples of the Habsburg Empire until the close of the last war were collectively called the Austrian or the Austro-Hungarian nation, and the bi-lingual Belgians and the tri-lingual Swiss are still called nations. In the United States a special usage obtains, for here the word is frequently applied to the whole body of the people coming under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

It was in part to atone for the abuse of the word "nation" that the word "nationality" was coined in the early part of the nineteenth century and speedily incorporated into most European languages. Thenceforth, while "nation" continued chiefly to denote the citizens of a sovereign political state, nationality was more exactly used in reference to a group of persons speaking the same language and observing the same customs. The jurists have done their best to corrupt the new word "nationality," just as they had corrupted the old word "nation"; they have utilised

<sup>1</sup> For example, the "nations" at the University of Paris were France, Normandy, Picardy, and England; at the University of St. Andrews they were Fife, Lothian, Angus, and Britain; at the University of Vienna they were Austria, Saxony, Bohemia, and Hungary. Cf. Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (1895).

"nationality" to indicate citizenship. For example, they speak of a person of British nationality though thereby they may mean any subject of King George V, a subject mayhap who, in the non-legal sense, belongs to the Boer nationality of South Africa or to the French-Canadian nationality of North America.

In general, however, "nationality" is far less ambiguous than "nation" and is most commonly and can be most properly used to designate a group of people who speak either the same language or closely related dialects, who cherish common historical traditions, and who constitute or think they constitute a distinct cultural society. In this sense, a nationality may exist without political unity, that is, without an organised sovereign state of its own, and, *vice versa*, a political state may embrace several nationalities, though the tendency has been pronounced in modern times for every self-conscious nationality to aspire to political unity and independence. A nationality which is not politically independent and united is metaphorically styled an "oppressed" or "subject" or even "enslaved" nationality. A nationality, by acquiring political unity and sovereign independence, becomes a "nation," or, to avoid the use of the troublesome word "nation," establishes a "national state." A national state is always based on nationality, but a nationality may exist without a national state. A state is essentially political; a nationality is primarily cultural and only incidentally political.

The word "nationalism" appeared in European vocabularies about the same time as, or shortly after, the appearance of "nationality" and has acquired several shades of meaning. It stands in the first place for an actual historical process, that of establishing nationalities as political units, of building out of tribes and empires the modern institution of the national state. Secondly, the term indicates the theory, principle, or ideal implicit in the actual historical process. In this sense it signifies both an intensification of the consciousness of nationality and a polit-

ical philosophy of the national state. Thirdly, it may mean, in such phrases as "Irish nationalism" or "Chinese nationalism," the activities of a particular political party, combining an historical process and a political theory; this meaning is clearer when the adjective "nationalist" is employed, for example, in speaking of the historical Irish Nationalist Party. A fourth and final use of "nationalism" is to denote a condition of mind among members of a nationality, perhaps already possessed of a national state, a condition of mind in which loyalty to the ideal or to the fact of one's national state is superior to all other loyalties and of which pride in one's nationality and belief in its intrinsic excellence and in its "mission" are integral parts. Though hereafter we shall give some consideration to nationalism as an historical process, we shall chiefly be concerned with nationalism as the condition of mind just indicated. For this is the nationalism which in the twentieth century is most in evidence. It is this nationalism which colours thought and conditions action in political, social, and cultural spheres, in our domestic politics and in our foreign relations.

## 3

Nationalism is a modern emotional fusion and exaggeration of two very old phenomena—nationality and patriotism. There always have been, so far as historians and anthropologists know, human entities that can properly be called nationalities. There has been from ancient times the love of country or native land, which is patriotism. But nationalism is a modern, almost a recent, phenomenon. This point is so impressive in itself and so fundamental to our study as to merit and require some detailed explanation.

Let us begin by considering the basis of nationality. We have already defined nationality as "a group of people who speak either the same language or closely related dialects, who cherish common historical traditions, and who



constitute or think they constitute a distinct cultural society." But what is the historical and anthropological basis of such a grouping? What determines nationality in general and distinguishes one nationality from another?

Human nature, it has been suggested. In a certain sense this is perfectly true, for man is by nature gregarious and has always lived and laboured and fought in groups, and nationalities are certainly human groups. But nationalities are not the only groupings in which man has fought, laboured, and lived; outside of national limits man's gregariousness has repeatedly been exhibited in religious or economic groupings. It is no more an expression of human nature for citizens of France to display a distinguishing community of interest than for French and Polish Catholics, for Dutch and Scottish Protestants, for Rumanian and Galician Jews, for Russian and Italian Communists, or for American and German bankers.

It has been contended that geography makes nationality. The fact that Britain and Japan are islands separated from large continents and that the United States covers a large part of a continent widely distant from Eurasia has doubtless had something to do with the formation of the British, Japanese, and American nationalities. But geography alone will not explain why the British Isles are parcelled out among at least four nationalities, or why the Philippines are not Japanese, or why the Rio Grande rather than the Mississippi or the Rockies is the boundary between the American and Mexican nationalities. When we consider that some four nationalities—Portuguese, Castilian, Catalan, and Basque—coexist in the geographic unit known as the Iberian Peninsula, that the Polish and Magyar nationalities occupy parts (and only parts) of great plains, that the Greek nationality inhabits rocky coasts and islands, that Norwegian geography is similar in many significant aspects to Swedish, Yugoslav to Bulgarian, and even German to French, we must conclude that the idea of natural frontiers between nationalities is a myth.

A myth likewise is the notion, often advanced by uninformed or unreflective persons, that nationality is determined by race. While scientists are not at all agreed as to what precisely are the races of man, they are in complete agreement that every modern nationality consists of racial mixtures. Racially, modern Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Irishmen, Russians, Italians—almost all Europeans, and the Jews as well—alike comprise mongrel descendants of long-heads and round-heads, blonds and brunets, tall persons and short, stout and slim. The mixture may vary in the relative strength of its component elements from one part of Europe to another, but the degree of racial variation does not change abruptly at national borders. Even the Japanese and Chinese, though marked off by certain physical characteristics from Europeans, afford clear evidence of racial admixture, and the peoples of India, who of late have been developing a consciousness of common nationality, are a veritable hodge-podge of racial strains. Purity of race, if it exists at all, exists nowadays only among uncivilised tribesmen. Nationality actually cuts through and across race, though it must be confessed, in deference to racial propaganda, that an imaginary belief in blood relationship, that is, in race, has been an effective force in building and cementing nationalities.

Then there is the "soul of a people," the theory that every nationality has a group-mind with peculiar and constant mental qualities and endowments. Group-mind, in this sense, is a metaphysical concept, and we may be pardoned for wondering at the simple faith with which many recent writers, including some who deny or doubt the existence of the individual soul, have ascribed eternal full-fledged souls to the several nationalities. It is an obvious fact that in social customs nationalities do differ from one another: the English probably drink tea more commonly and inveterately than any other Europeans; the Germans are more addicted to especially tasty brands of beer; the Italians flavour their culture more pungently with garlic;

and there are doubtless other and even greater national distinctions. Besides, it is a fact amply demonstrated by competent psychologists that human beings may behave in one way in a crowd and in another way when they are alone, in a certain manner when they are subjected to group-pressure and in a different manner when such pressure is removed, that, in other words, there is a group-mind which is a part of, but in its effects distinct from, individual minds. In this sense we may admit the existence of a "national mind," a psychological force which impels the members of a nationality-group toward some community of thought and action, but to dub this national mind a "soul" is literary license. As a matter of fact, the group-mind of a nationality is demonstrably fickle and inconstant. Most characteristics ascribed to a given nationality are found on investigation to belong to several nationalities, and what is characteristic of a particular nationality at a given time is not necessarily characteristic of it at other times. The Greeks of the age of Pericles doubtless reeked with garlic quite as much as the Italians of the nineteenth century. The Germans who fought Caesar had not yet associated great music and profound philosophy with the refinements of Pilsener or Culmbacher. The king who signed Magna Carta and the barons who drove him to it did not drink tea.

Much buncombe has been talked and written about national characters. From examples which are legion, note may profitably be taken of a quotation from an otherwise informing essay by Mr. Charles Roden Buxton: "Just as England contributes her sense for political liberty, France her intellectual honesty and lucidity, Germany her industry and discipline, Italy her aesthetic aptitude, so Finland has her advanced democracy, Poland her music and art, Bohemia religious independence, the Serbs their warm poetic temperament, the Greeks their subtlety and their passion for the past, the Bulgarians their plodding endurance and taciturn energy, the Armenians their passion for education

and progress.”<sup>1</sup> The fallacies here are numerous and prodigious. It is implied, absurdly implied, that all Englishmen have a sense for political liberty and that only Englishmen are so endowed, that all Frenchmen are intellectually honest and clear-headed, that all Germans are industrious, that all Italians are artists or art-critics, that all Finns are ultimate democrats, that all Poles are musicians, that all Czechs are religious independents, *etc.* It is doubtful in some instances, as in that of the Czechs, whether the characteristic mentioned may be ascribed to any considerable section of the nationality. It is certain in every instance that the characteristic assigned to a nationality may be attributed with equal propriety to other nationalities, ancient as well as modern. Modern France is no more marked by intellectual honesty and lucidity than was ancient Italy; modern Italy possesses no greater aesthetic aptitude than Spain, France, southern Germany, or Japan; Finland has advanced along democratic highways no further than New Zealand, Switzerland, or Oregon; the thermometer of poetic feeling records no higher temperature in Serbia than in England, Ireland, Germany, and Arabia; Greek subtlety is outclassed by Armenian, and in passion for the past Greeks are surely equalled by Jews and Chinese; “plodding endurance and taciturn energy” have conventionally been ascribed less to Bulgarians than to Scots; and to anyone who gives a thought to the national traits of Americans, Japanese, Germans, or Australians it seems utterly ridiculous to hit upon the “passion for education and progress” as a peculiarity of Armenians.

It is but fair to Mr. Buxton to quote later and wiser words from his essay: “Peoples are not, in fact, to be distinguished from one another by a single mark, detaching itself from a background of pure similarity. It is the total combination of qualities, of historical events, of natural surroundings, which makes them what they are—conglomerations of vari-

<sup>1</sup> “Nationality”, in *Towards a Lasting Settlement*, ed. by C. R. Buxton (1916), p. 51.



ous and conflicting personalities and parties, touched nevertheless with some unifying character which makes even their very divisions distinctive." With much of this I for one am in agreement, but I would warn against rash imaginings and easy generalisations as to what precisely may be the "unifying character" of a nationality, and at the same time, I would re-emphasise the point that national traits undergo radical alterations, often in a relatively brief time. Voltaire, writing in the first half of the eighteenth century,<sup>1</sup> contrasted the English and the French: the English he thought to be changeable and revolutionary, beheading one king and exiling another, perpetually tinkering with government and religion, forever fermenting; the French he stigmatised as conservative and as being too fondly attached to the past and to the moss-covered traditions of divine-right monarchy and orthodox Christianity, stolid and stagnant. The late Mr. J. E. C. Bodley, writing at the end of the nineteenth century,<sup>2</sup> again contrasted the English and the French: the English, to him, were a conservative, anti-revolutionary, and substantial people, among whom liberty slowly broadened out, with the emphasis on "slowly," whilst the French were fickle, volatile, and revolutionary, beheading one sovereign and expelling several others, fitfully experimenting with constitutions, and feverishly repudiating religious orthodoxy. Both Bodley and Voltaire possessed no little critical acumen, and the explanation of their widely divergent estimates must be sought in a change, within two centuries, in the "group-minds" of the French and English nationalities.

Summing up the objections against the concept of peculiar and constant "souls" in the several nationalities, Mr.

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire, *Letters Concerning the English Nation* (London, 1733), especially letters v-ix.

<sup>2</sup> J. E. C. Bodley, *France*, rev. ed. (1899). A somewhat different emphasis appears in the same author's *Romance of the Battle-Line in France* (1919). Apparently the national "soul" of France underwent still another profound change within twenty years. Cf. Abbé Dimnet, *France Herself Again* (1914).