THE REVIVAL OF CONSERVATIVE NATIONALISM: HUNGARY AND EASTERN EUROPE

by

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Nationalism in Education
A Comparative View 1

Introduction

In the present paper, I give a short analysis of educational nationalism. The basis of my analysis is a series of case studies and analytical reviews, prepared for the XVIIIth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences. They show how ethnocentrism and nationalism emerge and take various forms in education. I combine social science approach with an anthropological/theological analysis of nationalism as a mythology that concerns individuals and groups ultimately. It is the reason why nationalism becomes the most fascinating and destroying ideology of the present-day history.

First, I will shortly describe the origin of nationalism, pointing out the various forms that it took and the societal groups that developed nationalism as their ideologies. Second, I analyse the structure of nationalism. I will point out the common elements of nationalism and relate them to religious mythologies. Third, I describe the function of nationalism in the identity renewal of the self as well as the political ideology of the group. The main idea of the present paper is that educational nationalism, including that of the Turks, Koreans, Japanese, East Europeans, Africans etc., have similar characteristics. Therefore, we have to deal with them in similar ways.
The Origin of Nationalism

Two competing ideologies have emerged in the modern history of the world: nationalism and socialism. Socialism was the hope and promise of those who fought for equality and social justice. Nationalism served as the ideology of liberty and independence. Both of them served as compelling frames of references for those who lost their group identities in the turmoil of the recent history of the world.

Influences

The origin of nationalism rooted, at least in Europe, in the Romanticism. Elements of nationalism, like the common history of a nation, the "authentic roots" that would judge each and every modern phenomena in the life of a society, the stress on a national language, the expressions of "motherland", "mother tongue", the passion toward one's own traditions has clearly shown in the great literature of the XIX century Romanticism. It was the paradigm that influenced the ethnic revival throughout the Balkan, after being liberated under the Ottomans.

European nationalism was also strongly influenced by the Enlightenment, the revolution in France, and the wars of Napoleon. The strong sense for freedom and independence, characteristic to every educational nationalisms, came either as a direct influence under the victories of the Great French Army, or as a reaction to them. Napoleon intitiated the Polish nationalists for their freedom fights. His successes treasened the Hungarian nobilities, like the Germans and others, so they created their own nationalisms.

Social Background

Nationalism, according to Marxism-Leninism, is the leading ideology of the national bourgeoisie and serves as its ideology for a national market. The explanation may fit to some of the Europeans, clearly does not fit, however, to the Easterners. In several other parts of the world, instead, nationalism served the political elites in their struggle for national autonomy.
Societies had various kinds of political elites. Some, like the Japanese, the Hungarians, or the Ottomans had nobility origins. The "intelligentsia" (mostly priests, writers, and teachers) created the political elites of the newly created Bulgaria.6

In any case though, they rooted deeply in their former feudal systems (or the feudal systems of their rulers, like the Ottomans or the Habsburgians). Some nationalism, therefore, had a special feudal character.7 It was always closely related to an agrarian economy, a culture that were dominated by churches and public education (not the mass media and the political arena), and a political life where fight and defense, wars and revolutions substituted parliamentary debates and interest groups. Nationalism became and remained for a long time the frame of reference in which power elites with their nobility origin, as well as peasants under nobility influences tended to identify themselves.

Patterns

It comes from the facts, mentioned above, that nationalism is not a popular ideology, rather, it has always been the ideology of the few, that is, the power elite. Nationalism offered a frame of reference for the identity of a group. It solved their identity crisis by selecting them out from the mass of the alienated. Nationalism emerged as an elitist, rather then a populist ideology.8

In order to use it as a mass political ideology, nationalism had to be enriched with elements popular among other groups of the given societies. Depending on the societal groups they wanted to use as their additional political supporter, the elites combined their nationalisms with other ideologies. In order to extend their influences to traditional circles (peasants, the small nobilities), they combined nationalism with religious, cultural, and historical elements. Nationalism proved to be influential among industrial workers if it had been "enriched" by elements of socialism.9 Also, nationalism served the military power elite which mixed it up with the adoration of force and power. We can differentiate, therefore, among various patterns of nationalism, like historical, religious, cultural, territorial nationalism, as well as extreme forms of nationalism like national socialism, fascism, or chauvinism.10
The Structure of Nationalism

Nationalism may have various patterns and forms of manifestations. Yet, a closer look shows structural elements behind various forms. The concept of being chosen, having a promised land from where the nation has come, a short but dramatic period of the history where The Nation itself is manifested, the leading figures of the nation who create a historical portrait gallery, the symbols that refer beyond themselves, as well as the social activities that gather the members of the collectives - those are but some of the elements which can be commonly found in the different manifestations of nationalism.

The Chosen Nation

The chosen nation concept refers to the common historical origin of the members of a nation. It reflects the essential assumption that a nation is a group of members with common historical background, a common past, and the same roots and origins.

Every nationalism has a historical orientation. The common past, rather than the common origin is the notion which creates a nation from the various societal groups. Even the word “nation” presents this notion of common birth and same origin. It is the notion according to which Hungarians and Bulgarians, together with the Ottomans, arrived to Europe from unknown parts of Asia (although Bulgarians are more of Slavik then of Turkish origin not to mention the unending debates about the Finn-Ugrish origin of the Hungarians). There are practically no historical evidences for those mythologies of common origin. Rather, all historical evidences show the mixed origins of the nations, the field of their origins serving as a melting pot for those Asian and Middle East population which had been expelled by migration waves out of Asia and could not integrate into the Central European feudal societies.

Not the entire population creates a nation, as further mythological analysis shows, but only parts of it. It is the theoretical answer to the practical question of mixed origin. It was a small but aggressive Turkish tribe that subjugated peaceful and slavish Slavs and adopted their language in order to let the be understood by the Slavs. It is the Bulgarian explanation to the fact that the
Bulgarian language seems to be the most traditional one among the Slavic languages. Hungarian have more or less the same myth of their origin. In almost all of these legendaries, there appears a leading force that rules the mixed population and creates a nation out of them. Originally, they are the Nation. They are the chosen ones to that historical task.

In some mythologies, there are clear signs and historical momentums where the vocation has been given. Usually, it is combined with a great war, a historical struggle, or at least with a successful hunting (Hungarians). In any case though, there are signs showing that the particular tribe had been chosen out of the mass of the people on the world. The notion of the chosen nation originally covered but only a few. Later, they started to share their vocation with broader circles in their communities. Nationalism, therefore, is originally a mythology of the power elite. It has only been popularized later.

The nation, being chosen, has usually close ties to an other one which legitimize it. Hungarians, as the chosen nation, have their legitimacy from the Huns (a suspicious legacy for present Europeans). Rumanians are legitimized by the Dacians, more by the Romanians (it is not by chance that modern Rumania changed the spelling of its country name to Romania). Both Serbians and Croats (not to mention Albanians) refer to the Tracians and Illyric population as their antecedents.

The issue is not the historical relevances of those mythologies. Mythologies have no real historical relevances. Besides it is clear that almost all of those mythologies have been created under French and German Romantic influences. Yet, the chosen nation mythology, together with the unknown origin and the mystical land from where the nation received the vocation for ruling the entire world, has its clear political relevance as part of each and every nationalism.

The Promised Land

The second element which proved to be common in every nationalism is the notion about a promised land. Promised lands tend to have common characteristics. For instance, the promised land can be described by geography and yet, it cannot be visited. Either because the description is not exact enough and serves only as a historical proof. Or
because the territory is existing but it is not existing anymore as a Land (it is part of other entities, it is not a unity itself). Also, it cannot be visited for the simple reason that it has been more a historical than a geographical reality. In any case though, the promised land is outside the present territory of the nation and as such creates the historical mission to the nation to own it again.

It is needless to list "promised lands". Just to mention a few, Lithuania is one of the promised lands for the Poles. Partly the Baltic countries and partly the gate to the Mediterraneaian (Byzantine) have been the promised lands (among others) for the Russians. For the Ottomans, it has been the Balkan. For the Bulgarians, Macedonia is the part where the Bulgarian culture and religion have their birth (together with Cyril and Method). For the Koreans, the Northern part of the Korean peninsula has been "promised".

More important is the function of the promised land in the nationalist mythology. The chosen nation concept creates the common history, while the promised land notion reflects the common future of the nation. The notion of being promised again serves as reference to transcendent legitimacy. It clearly copes with the idea of the chosen nation and reflects a militant group of people who has a vocation to rule the world, or if not the whole world than its promised land.

History

Nationalism is always bound into history. But history has more significance for nationalism as just the chain of events. It is precisely the way how the Nation (the mission and the fate of the collective) is manifesting itself. Nationalism is a political ideology of historical type. But also, history is the manifestation of the mission of the nation and the message it has to convey to the world.

Almost every nationalism depends upon a short and dramatic period of historical events. In that course of action, every step is clear and well describe. As we know the final development, we have the special sense that every events of that period has a special meaning. In other words, that historical period summarizes the past of the nation as well as it projects the future of the collective.
Examples show that nationalist mythologies cannot be subject to historical analyses. When they reflect history, it is not the history in the scientific sense of the word. Rather, it is the manifestation of the nation to which they belong and which has not only a past vocation and a future promise, but also a detailed plan to reach those promises.

The Leading Figures

Every nationalism develops its own portray gallery. It consists of the heroes of the history, mentioned above. They are the actors in the short but dramatic course of events that sheds light on the fate of the nation. They convey the message a nation should convey to the rest of the peoples all over the world. They are the saints of that particular nations.21

Nationalism, unlike other ideologies, has a strong sense of political agitation. It is more a political than a philosophical ideology. It is the main reason for developing those historical portray galleries. It gives the main idea of nationalism close to those who adopt it as their leading ideology. It also helps the individual to identify himself/herself with the nation. Nation is a theoretical concept and it is usually hard to be identified with concepts like that. It is much easier to be identified with its heroes.

The acts of the national heroes and the dramatic period of the nation's history overlap each other. They are the heroes who act. It is the course of the nation's history which gives them the chance to emerge from the mass. Those heroes are, namely, the models of the chosen nation who fulfilled the historical promises.

Rarely are they peaceful figures, creating arts and doing humanities. Rather, they are energetic and ambitious, aggressive and forceful representatives of their nations. The portray galleries of nationalism, therefore, represent the active and aggressive character of nationalism. They fought for us. Either they won or lost, they did it for the present generation. With their historical actions, they redeemed the present and the future generations. Therefore, they are the forefathers.

Symbols
Besides that portrayal gallery, each nationalism has its own collection of national symbols.

Signs stand for concepts and meanings. They have no real connection with what they represent. It is upon simple agreement that characters refer to sounds and we can change characters in order to sign different sounds with them. Unlike signs, symbols participate in the existence of what they symbolize. In other words, symbols themselves became parts of the realities for what they stand. Clearly, it happened to the national symbols.22

The national shield, as it appears in Hungary (as in other parts of Eastern Europe) symbolizes the independence of those particular nations. But also, the shield is a historical development itself. It stands for the nation's independence because it has been created during the fight for independence. The Hungarian crown not only symbolizes the historical Hungary. It was created in the course of that history, and therefore, it is a historical development itself. By this way, national symbols not only serve as signs of national proud or national feeling. They are themselves outcomes of the national history and as such, they crystallize the history that has created the nation.23

One can even state that the national symbols transcend themselves referring to somewhat which stand behind and beyond them. It sounds, however, too idealistic, because nationalism is never a philosophy, rather an ideology of a historic type. In any case though, symbols remind the members of the nation to their common heritage and their promised future. And with those functions, the national symbols represent the past. National portrayal galleries have only the function to modelize the history of the nation. The national symbols can also present that history.

Without a clear differentiation between signs and symbols one cannot understand the strong feelings, even enthusiasm for national symbols like flags, emblems, anthems, crowns, fortresses and the like. Burning the flag, destroying a fortress, changing the emblems or creating a new anthems - they are but the strongest attacks against national feelings. It is not by chance that national symbols pop up suddenly on streets and places where national feelings have been heated up. They are the clear and visible symbols of the vivid nations since they themselves are proofs of that liveliness, more the nations' revivals.
Festivities

There are special activities which complete the mythology of a nationalism. Those activities (festivities, holidays, anniversaries and memorial days) held partly the function of remembering. They days of the turning events in the course of the nation's history are the occasions when members of the community remember to the leading figures of their national gallery, visit and/or use national symbols and by doing so they demonstrate their national identities.

National festivities, however, have other functions too. They contribute to the creation of the nation. Since they are social events they offer social occasions for those who want to experience their identities. Festivities, therefore, fulfill an important role in the creation of the nation as a collective. Memorial days, anniversaries, national holidays give the individual the feeling of belonging to others and help them personally experiencing what the nation really means. Creating their own national holidays, nationalism goes far beyond philosophical ideologies. As a mythology, nationalism serves both religious as well as political aims.

The Mythology of Nationalism

A brief analysis of national mythologies shows their common elements. One question to asked is the origin of those paralels. Is there any scientific explanation to the fact that educational nationalisms have so many common elements? There are some possible answers to that question, although not all of them can be acceptable.

One answer is that nationalism all over the world have common grounds. They may root in human nature. It is an explanation which sounds fascinating and is not really far from some psychological approaches. Yet, I don't see strong evidences to state it.

An other answer would state that nationalisms in one region simply cope each other. Since they are political ideologies, one can even argue that one political elite develops its own nationalism as a reaction to another one. There are some evidences for that theory. It is clear, e. g. that some patterns of the Polish or Hungarian nationalisms influenced Slovakian or Lithuanian nationalisms. The theory of importing nationalism would also fit to the Croatian or the Rumanian cases where elites have been influenced a great deal by French and Italian models. Also, a clear example
of creating a new nationalism has been the Bulgarian case where some elements of the new Bulgarian nationalism was evidently imported from Hungary by the new Austro-Hungarian elite. We can also mention Koreans having been influenced either by Chinese or Japanese nationalism. 26 Yet, the question remains about the same patterns of the exporting nationalism.

A third explanation would go back to common cultural roots, e.g., to the Jewish-Christian tradition. No detailed analysis is necessary to prove that the mythologies of the European nationalisms is closely related to the Christian tradition, which, in turn, is a close reflection of the Old Testament. One can even argue that the religion of the Bible is a religious nationalism itself. Therefore, it can easily serve as the paradigm of every nationalism throughout the Christian world.

Yet, the question remains whether the Biblical pattern of religious nationalism is a paradigm of its own. Or is it a development of earlier versions of religious nationalisms which flew from one culture to the other one? The question needs further extensive studies but has one important relevance. Having its structure and the mythology, nationalism of different type and for various reasons can be created "artificially". That is, it can be created and disseminated even today for the sake of the same political aspirations. The explanation to this fact lies not only in the common structure of the various nationalisms but also in the functions of nationalisms in the various social and political systems. 27

The Functions of Nationalism

Nationalism, as an ideology, has two essential functions. The one can be called religious, and the second political.

The Religious Function

By religious function I mean that nationalism serves like a religion for those who experience alienation and identity crisis. It offers "the nation" as one's ultimate concern and
by this way helps the individual to renew his/her identity.28

One's ultimate concern is the orientation of the personality with which an individual "logs on" something or somebody. He/she experiences it as being attracted and fascinated by the one he/she is ultimately concerned about. Marx compares the situation to the influence of the then newly applied opium.29 The great mystical literature used to describe the situation as being "captured". Philosophical idealists would say that a person with his/her ultimate concern can overcome the split between Subjective and Objective. Existential philosophy and psychology under its influence talks about surviving and avoiding alienation.30 In any case though, it is a state, rather an act of the personality with which it concentrates all of its efforts to something or somebody by this way recreating its own identity.

Religious beliefs, like any other beliefs, cannot be subject to scientific analysis. The question about the existence of somewhat which one ultimately concerns on, is a misleading question. We can analyse though the human behavior in its situation of being ultimately concerned (being captured or logged on). The solid field of analysis, therefore, is not the religion itself (whatever it means), rather the religious behavior of the human.

The recent analysis of religious behaviors shows that "ultimate concern" is one of their common characteristics. Whether it is called God, Universe, Being-Nonbeing, or is dedicated to a historical figure, an organization, a piece of land, or a natural event has no importance compared with the fact that they awake the human act of being logged on them. The central act of the religious personality is adoration which is the sign and representation of "being captured". According to this understanding, religion, that is a behavior of being ultimately concerned, and therefore adoring that which (who) concerns one ultimately is an essential element of the human being and his/her society.

That which concerns one ultimately goes beyond his/her personal realm of reality. In other words, it transcends the personality. Experiencing somewhat that transcends the individual is an essential part of the act with which the self "logs on" and "is captured". Experiencing somewhat that goes beyond one's own realm of reality, though, is a contradiction itself. That which one is ultimately concerned about is manifesting itself (becomes immanent). The analysis of religious behaviors shows that those manifestations have always two challenging impacts. The human is fascinated and
trembled by them. Being ultimately fascinated (captured) and in the danger of being ultimately destroyed are both impacts of those manifestations.

Some outcomes from the analysis of religious behaviors helps us understand the religious function of nationalism. It is a function with which the Nation becomes someone's ultimate concern. That is, he/she "is captured" by his/her nation, he/she "logs on" it. It is the Nation that he/she adores as the ultimate reality, because the Nation transcends the individual's realm of reality.

It can only be if the transcendental reality, that is the Nation becomes immanent. The Nation becomes immanent in the individual's life in the course of the history. When it occurs, it always occurs with fascination and with tremble.31 History connects the individual with his/her Nation for a historical minute and then, it throws the individual away. The challenging but dangerous love affair usually destroys the individual. If he/she survives, the Nation remains his/her ultimate concern for the rest of the life.

Those who escaped become members of the survivors' community. They have proofs about their ultimate concerns. Also, they find their new identities among the members of the new community. They are, in religious term, redeemed. Those who have not yet experienced that manifestation (that is, they have not experienced history) are still in their sinful state. They are in crisis because they don't belong to the community of the survivors, the redeemed. They still love their Nation, but have not yet any evidence of their love. Their concern is not proved to be ultimate yet.

The religious function of nationalism, as described, is to overcome identity crisis and create new identities. The analysis, though, shows that there is always a dangerous element in it. It is, in religious terminology, the demonic element of nationalism. It not only overcomes identity crisis but can also destroy the self. Using the social science language, identity renewal can easily be dangerous if it oppresses the individual and subjugates him/her in the name of the Nation. An analysis of the political function of nationalism clears out that danger.

The Political Function
The second function of nationalism can be called political. It is the function which turns a political elite legitimate even if they create the minority in the given society. Nationalism is an elitist ideology which is selective and separatist. With an ideology like this, the power elite can only be influential if it combines nationalism with other, more popular ideologies. The result has been a series of variations of nationalism, more or less powerful, attractive and dangerous, as they came out of the recent political history.

Nationalism is usually enriched with traditional elements of religion, history, and culture. This is the way how nationalism becomes a frame of reference for groups that used to identify themselves by their churches and religions. The origin of a nation (an important element of every nationalism, see below) are connected with the origin of a particular religion and/or the establishment of that church. Religious nationalism proves to be a powerful ideology in societies where the elite wants to influence traditional country population with strong religious beliefs.

Similar to religious nationalism is popular nationalism based on historical notions and cultural experiences. Here the stress lies on common cultural elements like language, customs, traditions, folklore. These are the ties which bind individuals together and give them their group identities. Those elements are usually named as national characteristics with the argument that they characterize "the nation". It is an ideology that has been developed by elites with academic background (teachers, university professors, and the educational establishment, journalists, editors and other mass media professionals). They address popular nationalism as an alternative to those who already lost their traditional religious beliefs but are still traditional and under the influences of various kind of mass information sources. Societies with strong agricultural background share that popular nationalism.

Chauvinism is also a well known version of nationalism. In the extreme case of national separatism, heavy stress is put on territorial integrity, the boarders of the nation, and its homogeneity in terms of culture, "race", religion, social structure. Here the power elite wants to influence an additional groups besides itself but in any case will remain in minority compared with the majority of the given society. A more military type of nationalism is experienced in military coups. They - are legitimate, the argumentation says, because of a danger from outside that challenge the
nation's integrity and because of the moral decline that desorganize it from inside.

Societies have different majority groups which are worth to influence by the political elite. A conservative middle class, consisted by administration, government and party machinery, central offices and officers, state owned economy, bureaucratized services (health care, social security, education), accepts the notion of the "nation state". Here, the political elite is supported by that middle class and develop an ideology that penetrates each and every state activities. 35 Well known examples are the new born nation states of pre-war Eastern Europe. 36 They preferred national language to world languages, national intelligentsia to the "cosmopolitans", national army and defence to international agreements. The "nation state" as a value judgment is one of the outcomes from the collapse of the XIX century empires of Central Europe, the XX century empires of Eastern Europe, as well as the present trembling of Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union. 37

On the other hand, an industrialized society can be influenced by nationalism only if it is combined with its rival, socialism. The combinations of nationalism and socialism (those who exploit us are those foreigners who had conquered us) proved to be the most fascinating and destroying ideology in the course of the history. The simple reason is that nationalism combined with socialism reaches almost all strata of a society from the power elites and the middle class (nation state) to the working class (socialism) and the agricultural population (popular nationalism). Nationalism combined with socialism represents the dangerous power of political ideology in its entire realities. It is also the serious and last warning to those who could remain outside. Identity renewal can not only overcome our present crisis but can also easily destroy individuals as well as their communities.

Summary

In the present paper, I define nationalism as an ideology that has a common mythology and a political function.
An analysis of the structure of nationalism shows the common elements in every nationalism. They are clearly rooted in the Jewish-Christian tradition and can easily be compared with Biblical legacies. Yet, the question remains unanswered whether the Biblical tradition itself reflects a more generous pattern which is known all over the world and which has only been specifically customized according to the needs of the Jewish nation as their religious nationalism.

I differentiate between two essential functions of present day nationalism, the religious and the political. Nationalism as a religion (in the broader sense of the word) offers a solution for those who suffer identity crisis. It can, however, turn to be dangerous, if it oppresses the individual and subjugates him/her to the collective with the illusion of identity renewal. Nationalism as a political ideology legitimize an elite with the argument that they are the models for the entire community. In its most dangerous forms (fascism, national socialism) nationalism is combined with its rival ideology, socialism. Educational nationalism always has its "demonic" side which needs careful analysis and critical approach.
Notes


3 Travelling through Bulgaria, one comes usually across with statues of liberation from the late XIX century: the big Russian soldier holds his small sister in his arms. The small girl is in her folkloric costume. She is the small but free Bulgaria in the arms of the big brother: Russia. Those statues are the most visible signs of romantic influences in national issues. See: Behar op. cit.

4 See Juska, op. cit., Kozma, op. cit.

5 Kim, op. cit., Romo, op. cit., Adjangba, op. cit.

6 Zaïm, op. cit., Behar, op. cit.

7 Kozma, op. cit., Mina, op. cit.

8 Mina, op. cit., Zaïm, op. cit.

9 Kozma, op. cit.

10 Prakopimaite, op. cit., Ray, op. cit.

11 Ray, op. cit.


14 Zaim, op. cit.

15 Behar, op. cit.

16 Kozma, op. cit.

17 Kozma, op. cit.


19 The promised land is sometimes the land of their own, under foreign occupations. See Juska, op. cit, Zelvys, op. cit., as well as any of the present Yugoslavian republic and its ideologies struggling for independence.

20 Ray, op. cit.

21 Zelvys, op. cit.


23 Kozma, op. cit.

24 Tillich, op. cit. 112-26.


26 Kim, op. cit.

27 In this context, see the analysis of Titma, op. cit.


33 A. H. Richmond, Ethnic nationalism: social science paradigms. International Social Science J. 11987, 111: 3-18


