This lecture asks what nationalism is, how it can be both liberating and dangerous, and how fascism and other authoritarian ideologies differ from the traditions we have studied so far.

Nationalism is the belief that humanity is divided into nations, that each nation has a right to govern itself, and that loyalty to the nation comes first in politics.

- It is among the most powerful forces of the last two centuries, shaping borders, wars, and daily identity.

Where do nations come from?

- Some scholars see them as ancient.
- Most historians now follow a modernist view.
- Benedict Anderson, in Imagined Communities, published in 1983, called the nation an imagined political community, because members never meet most of their fellow…

The French Revolution made the nation the source of sovereignty.

- In 1789 the abbé Sieyès asked what the Third Estate was, and answered that it was the whole nation.
- Revolutionary armies mobilized citizens in the name of France, and Napoleon's conquests provoked nationalist resistance across Europe.

In German-speaking lands, thinkers such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte stressed language and culture as the soul of a people.

- Giuseppe Mazzini founded Young Italy in 1831 and linked national freedom to democracy.
- Italy was unified in 1861, and Germany, under Otto von Bismarck, in 1871.

Scholars often distinguish civic nationalism from ethnic nationalism.

- Civic nationalism defines the nation by shared citizenship and institutions, so anyone can join.
- Ethnic nationalism defines it by descent, language, or religion.
- The distinction, popularized by Hans Kohn, is useful but blurry, because most real nationalisms mix both.

Nationalism has also been a liberating force.

- Colonized peoples used it to win independence.
- Gandhi's movement helped bring about Indian independence in 1947, Ghana became independent in 1957, and dozens of other states followed in the decades after the...
- Woodrow Wilson's call for self-determination in 1918 helped legitimize the idea.

But nationalism has a dark side.

- When peoples are not neatly separated, drawing borders can mean expelling or killing those left on the wrong side.
- The collapse of empires after 1918, and again in the 1990s, produced forced migrations and, in the Balkans, ethnic cleansing and genocide.
- National pride can curdle into hatred of outsiders.

Moderate nationalism is a live position today.

- Supporters argue that nations provide the solidarity that democracy and welfare states need, that people have a legitimate interest in their own culture, and that…
- Critics worry about exclusion, and cosmopolitans argue that moral concern should not stop at the border.

Fascism is a different matter.

- It arose after the First World War, in a Europe shaken by mass death, economic crisis, and fear of communist revolution.
- Benito Mussolini founded the first fascist movement in Italy in 1919 and became prime minister after the March on Rome in October 1922.

Fascists rejected liberalism, socialism, and parliamentary democracy alike.

- They glorified the nation or race, the leader, violence, and action.
- The Doctrine of Fascism, issued in 1932 under Mussolini's name with help from the philosopher Giovanni Gentile, said that everything lies within the state, nothing...

Nazism in Germany added a central racial ideology.

- Adolf Hitler became chancellor in January 1933.
- Within weeks, the Reichstag fire was used to suspend civil liberties, and by 1934 he held unchecked power.
- The regime persecuted Jews, Roma, disabled people, political opponents, and others.

The Second World War and the Holocaust followed.

- The Nazi regime and its collaborators murdered about six million Jews, along with millions of other civilians and prisoners.
- The war ended in 1945 with the defeat of Germany and Italy, and the Nuremberg trials began a new international law of crimes against humanity.

Scholars debate how to define fascism.

- Some stress its ideas, others its social base or its style.
- In 1951 Hannah Arendt described Nazism and Stalinism as totalitarian systems.
- They sought total control through terror and ideology.

Fascism is also not the same as every authoritarian system.

- Authoritarian regimes restrict political competition but may not seek to mobilize and remake every part of life.
- Military juntas, one-party states, personal dictatorships, and some monarchies are all different forms.
- Spain under Francisco Franco and Chile under Augusto Pinochet are examples of conservative authoritarian rule.

Why did democracies fall to these movements?

- Historians point to the shock of defeat and depression, weak institutions, fear of revolution, and elites who thought they could control the new movements.
- In Germany, the Weimar Republic faced mass unemployment after 1929, and conservatives hoped to use Hitler.
- Instead, he used them.

Today political scientists study a gradual path.

- Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way described competitive authoritarianism in 2002, in which elections exist but the ruling party tilts the field through control of media,…
- Backsliding usually comes through legal steps taken by elected leaders, and not through tanks in the street.

Lessons are debated.

- Some stress the need for strong institutions, independent courts, and a free press.
- Others stress addressing economic insecurity.
- Most agree that casually labeling opponents as fascists dilutes the term and makes real warnings harder to hear, and that denying the term when it fits is equally…

A final caution concerns memory.

- Nations tell stories about themselves, and those stories can unite or divide.
- Historians who test national myths against evidence sometimes provoke anger, yet an honest national history is a better foundation for citizenship than a flattering one.
- Democracies that face their past, as Germany did after 1945 in its public reckoning with the Nazi crimes, have often found that candor strengthens loyalty to the…

Here is an exercise.

- Take one nationalist movement from history, and decide whether it fits better as civic, ethnic, or liberating.
- Then compare it with a movement you know from today.
- In the next lecture we turn to ideologies that challenge the state itself, and ones that widen who politics is for.