

Ideology was more
important than culture
and religion



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How far do you agree? Colonial rule had brought about many significant impacts in South East Asian countries which included many dissatisfactions among the natives. Thus, this brought about the rise of nationalist movements. There are many reasons to why there was a development of these movements and the two main reasons for this cause was ideology as well as religion and culture.

The spread of ideology such as Marxism and communism and the preservation of culture and religion were one of the main factors as to why nationalist movements were widespread in the period before WWII. The growth of nationalism refers to how these movements were able to garner mass support from the locals, how far they are able to radicalize their movements and how united the movements were. The growth of nationalism was largely based on ideology rather than religion. Thus, I agree strongly to the statement.

Firstly, religion and culture played an important role in the rise of nationalist movements where it was able to gain mass support from the locals. Religion and culture was greatly displaced by the colonial powers and many natives were severely affected as religion played an important role in shaping their lives. For instance, religion managed to influence and gain mass support. This could be seen in Sareket Dagan Islam in Indonesia. It only managed to gain more support from the locals after changing its name and objectives in 1912 to Sareket Islam.

The party was based on Islamic reform, which stresses that Islam was a source of democratic ideas and spiritual education. The party dropped the term "Dagang" to appeal to a wider sector of society beyond commercial

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interests and retained the word “ Islam” which was useful politically in a country that was predominantly Muslim. This garnering of mass support through religion and culture could also be seen in Burma. Buddhism was a unifying force in the early phase of nationalist movements as it acted as a cohesive social force in pre-colonial Burma.

It was useful in providing the Burmese with a national identity which defied against the British and Indians. For instance, the pongyis placed the blame for the decline of Buddhism on colonialism to win rural support for the agitation. This was successful as in 1922, the pongyis came to control the religious General Council of the Sangha Sametggi (GCSS). In both cases, both parties made use of religion to gain mass support from the locals and was successful in doing so as well.

Thus, it can be said that religion and culture had helped the beginnings of the growth of nationalism as compared to ideology in that period. Ideological nationalist movements only came about in the 1990s due to foreign influences, external events and Western education. It lacked historical support from the natives unlike religion and culture, which played a great aspect in their lives. Ideology did not appeal to the masses during that period of time. This point could be illustrated in the Partai Komunis Indonesia(PKI) in Indonesia which was previously the ISDV faction of the SI which withdrew.

This withdrawal from the SI was seen as anti-religion and suspicious by the traditional Javanese society and thus unable to gain support from the masses. Thus, ideology was not as effective as religion and culture in terms of getting mass support. Therefore, culture and religion could be argued to <https://assignbuster.com/ideology-was-more-important-than-culture-and-religion/>

be more important than ideology. However, this is only valid at the start of the nationalist movements where ideology was not widespread yet. Religion and culture only contributes to nationalist movements to a small extent in terms of the radicalization of the movements.

Movements that centralize around religion and culture are less flexible and have less ability to adapt to new changes. These movements have backward visions. Nationalist movements that were based on religion and culture did not manipulate the influence of external events such as the Great Depression, WWI and suppression. These movements were not able to adapt or change its methods to cater to the needs of the locals and causing their support to decrease in the long-run. This shows that there was limited growth of nationalism in the movements based on religion and culture.

For instance, SI was led by two factions, one by Agus Salim and the other by the radical political party led by the ISDV. In 1918, when the Dutch sensed the radicalization in the SI, many supporters withdrew their support from the party. This caused the SI to ban joined membership in SI and other communist organisations which was based on ideology. This shows that movements that are based on religion did not grow and failed to become more radicalized which was essential for the growth of nationalism especially where colonial rule was suppressive.

Thus, from here it shows that religion does not play a significant role in the growth of nationalist movements as compared to ideology. Ideology on the other hand was more broad and more all-encompassed than religion and culture. This helped garner more support in the long-run and also led to the growth of national movement despite suppression from colonial powers.

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These movements are also able to manipulate situations of hardships to their advantage such as the Great Depression and its detrimental effects of the locals.

Movements based on ideologies are more flexible and are able to maneuver its methods to suit the needs of their people and also deter suppression of the colonial powers. For example, this could be seen in Ho Chi Minh's Vietminh. Ho Chi Minh adopted the ideology of Marxism which was introduced to him when he had served the USSR as a COMINTERN agent. He founded the Indochina Communist Party(ICP) in 1930 which was successful as it managed to make use of the harsh economic situation caused by the Great Depression.

The ICP managed to exploit the people's grievances politically by causing large-scale rural uprisings from 1930-1931 to the collapse of colonial authority in north central Vietnam. Also, nationalist groups which focus on ideology are able to gain support from external organizations which could pose a threat to the colonial powers. For example, COMINTERN helped to spread communist ideas and give funding to Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh sought help from them to train revolutionaries and gain experience which led to his party's success.

Despite suppression of the ICP, the growth of nationalism still managed to survive or better yet become stronger unlike nationalist movements based on religion and culture, This could be seen in the ICP where they still continued to work underground, strengthening nationalist resolve. Therefore, through ideology, the growth of nationalism grew even larger and played an

important role as compared to religion and culture. Religion and culture also did not help the growth of nationalism in terms of its people being united.

The unity of a party or a movement is crucial and lays an important role not only for the growth of nationalism but its success as well. Nationalist movements based on religion and culture pose different problems of unification. For instance, nationalist movements based on religion and culture in countries that have a diversity of religion and culture are largely disunited. This is because the nationalist movement of this sort is only able to gain support of the people of its religion and excludes the rest of its people. For instance, Malaya has different ethnic and religious groups such as the Malay, Chinese and Indians.

Each ethnic group have their own nationalist movements which are unable to cooperate with each other as they have different aims and goals. Thus, there are unable to work together to achieve nationalism so much so much that it hinders the growth of nationalism as there is a lack of unity between the different races. This is a great problem faced by movements which was based on religion and culture as SEA is a heterogeneous region with different ethnics and cultures and it divides the people. Ideology on the other hand did not face this problem as it appealed to all its people with one vision and goal.

It did not segregate its people as everyone had the same political aim which was to overthrow colonial powers and to achieve its ideological goal. For instance, the PNI in Indonesia established national key symbols and created the national anthem of Indonesia to unify the people. Therefore, ideology in this sense is more important in helping the growth of nationalism as it <https://assignbuster.com/ideology-was-more-important-than-culture-and-religion/>

helped to unite the people together as one as compared to religion and culture where it disunities its people. In conclusion, ideology is deemed to be a more important and relevant factor in the growth of nationalism.

Religion and culture played a crucial role in the beginnings of nationalism when colonial rule had disrupted the cultures of the locals. It helped to spark nationalistic movements among the locals however it was only short-lived as it was not able to handle suppression and manipulate situations as well as ideological nationalist movements. Movements based on ideology were able to garner more support in the long-run and provided a clear aim that helped to unite the people. Thus, religion and culture played an important role at the start while ideological movements helped to push the growth of nationalism further.