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A Universalistic Perspective of National Identity and Nationalism*

VICTOR IULIAN TUCA

This article makes an overall approach to the analysis on certain aspects of the political implication of nationalism upon collective identity in shaping a democratic regime or a totalitarian one. It deals with the following issues: a review of the terms a collective identity and a personal identity, in their original sense applied in the ancient Greek polis, in comparison with the modern concepts used by liberalism; an inquiry about nationalism as an outcome of democracy. One task of this chapter underlines the origins and political signification of nationalism, as an ideology that originated at the beginning of the 19th century. In this context, it will be examined the *locus classicus* of the dichotomy civic – ethnic nationalism; an analysis of the totalitarian implications of nationalism, namely in the national-socialist and communist ideology. The focus is on a critical review of the Marxist interpretation of nationalism. As a research methodology, I will apply a method close to the one used in the influential book of Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities*, in which the nation is conceived as imagined political community.

For Anderson, the explanation of nationalism should start with two main features of the human condition: death and the diversity of languages (the Babel phenomenon). Because death means ultimately losing posterity, collective memory and solidarity of the nation helps us to overcome the threat of oblivion. According to Anthony D. Smith, nationalism, like religion, takes death and suffering seriously – in a way that progressive and evolutionary styles of thought like Marxism and liberalism do not¹. Continuing his theory, Anderson asserts that the nation possesses no reality independent of its images and representation. Thus, once deconstructed, the nation must appear to fragment and dissolve into its individual parts, and the nation is no more than the sum of its cultural representation². Compared with his view, the main difference of our approach is that we base it on another central concept, which can be called *the myth of the nation*.

A nation is more than a text or a discourse that can be understood and deconstructed and it is based on the central myths which include symbols, common past, traditions, laws and institutions. As opposed to discourse, myth does not need to be checked, it has no need for legitimisation. Myths and discourses are not opposites but are interrelated and complement each other in a complex way. The concept of myth can be seen as a process through which history is naturalised and functions as an almost non-conscious foundation for our perception of reality.

Roland Barthes explains the concept of myth in a way which may be very important for understanding the formation of national identity. In his understanding:

* Completed and revised by Radu Carp.

¹ Anthony D. SMITH, *Nationalism and Modernism*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, p. 132.

² *Ibidem*.

“Myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing; myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflexion [...] We reach here the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature. We now understand why, in the eyes of the myth-consumer, the intention can remain manifest without however appearing to have an interest in the matter: what causes mythical speech to be uttered is perfectly explicit, but it is immediately frozen into something natural; it is not read as a motive, but as a reason”¹.

Consequently, even though according to Anderson discourses can have the ability to create imagined communities they always remain inherently incomplete.

Only myths that inherently function as a basis for truth can articulate a national identity. Myths function on a level above discourses and narratives and can be older historical sediments of discursive forms. They are rather impervious to facts, because it works more symbolically on a deeper level of cultural meaning.

For a better understanding, myth can be compared to what Kuhn labels tacit knowledge, i.e. knowledge, which is left unquestioned until a paradigm shift occurs². From our perspective, myths function as a cultural system of signification, while discourses can be seen as a part of a more active and institutionalised system of power, which produced nationalism from above³.

In this respect, it is worth noticing that Michel Foucault uses the term “discourse” as a concept to analyse how subjects come into being, e.g. the production of the mad person being marginalised and classified as mad by modern powerful institutions. In this understanding the person classified as mad by these institutions of power and state will be seen as mad because they are authorities capable of articulating truths and the power to internalise these truths in the subject⁴. The same mechanism was used, in the last half of the 19th century by the power of state, in creating nationalistic discourses, e. g. in the policy of the German government under Bismarck’s rule, in order to persuade all Germans to identify with a nation and involve themselves in its struggles.

Finally, the concepts of myth and discourses are mainly employed in the second part of this paper and they are conceived as a reservoir of signification, knowledge and defence strategy, which can be activated in the process of national identity making.

TWO CONCEPTS OF IDENTITY

Collective and Personal Identity in Ancient Athens

Dealing with nationalism and national identity means, in the first instance, to clarify the relation between a personal identity and a collective one. At the beginning, an important question is raised: can we talk about a collective identity of a

¹ Roland BARTHES, *Mythologies*, Seuil, Paris, 1970, p. 140.

² Thomas KUHN, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1962.

³ In the Anderson’s theory – official nationalism. See Benedict ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, New York, 1991, p. 83.

⁴ Michel FOUCAULT, *Power Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Pantheon, New York, 1980.

group or a historical unit? The ancient answer to this question implies that each group identity supposes a political community.

For Aristotle, the identity of a *polis* is primarily a constitutional identity, the *politeia*, through which a community becomes a political subject. It is founded on the *koinoia* of knowing about right and wrong (the *dikaion*) as well as about what is beneficial or not. It rests on solidarity (*philia*) of people and its political manifestation is a general consensus, *homonoia as philia politiké*¹. Collective identity in the full sense of the concept implies a political dimension: collective identity formation tends towards the establishment of a polity. At the same time, a collective identity means a common history, common views about the present situation, common projects for our future and tasks that we are facing all the time. In this respect, identity is founded on spiritual ties. It can be grasped in a "core of shared meanings" in sharing a common universe of symbols, in one word, in experiencing the same common myths. One of the central symbols of ancient Athens was the political regime of democracy². Here, the sovereignty of the people appeared to be completed once in this direct democracy every citizen participated in taking the political decision. The Greek society of that time (Athens of Pericles) was far away from being so democratic. There are some reasons for this. Firstly, the ones who took part in political life in Athens were just a minority of the population, because the slaves (more numerous than the citizens) were, obviously, excluded. Also, foreigners and women were excluded. Then it was very easy to manipulate a crowd than a small assembly. (e. g., the famous Socrates trial). On the other hand, the concepts of the rights and freedoms of citizens were unknown to Athenian democracy. For instance, somebody could easily be ostracised without committing a crime.

What appears more important is that, in traditional societies like the closely integrated life of the Greek *polis*, the social conditions in which the individuality of the people (in a modern sense) could emerge were absent.

In his *De la liberté des anciens comparée à celle des modernes*, Benjamin Constant noticed that the freedom of the ancients consists of

"exercising collectively but directly, several parts of complete sovereignty; in deliberating, in the public square, over war and peace; in forming alliances with foreign governments, in voting laws, in pronouncing judgements, in examining the accounts, the acts, the stewardship of the magistrates; in calling them to appear in front of the assembled people, in accusing, condemning or absolving them"³.

This kind of freedom needs a political community, an *ekklesia* or a *demos* that it has as main attribute the decision in the public affairs. In such an environment the identity of the man was fixed in terms of a limited set of clearly defined social roles and functions. According to Aristotle, everybody outside the *polis*, slaves or barbarians, was deprived not of the faculty of speech, but of a way of life in which

¹ ARISTOTLE, *Politics*, book I, chapter 2 and book III, chapter 3 in E. BARKS, *Politics of Aristotle*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1958.

² The term democracy has Greek origins (*demokratia*) and its original meaning signifies the government of the people. See Giovanni SARTORI, *A Theory of Democracy Revisited*, Chatham House Publishers, Inc, 1987.

³ Benjamin CONSTANT, *Political Writings*, ed. by Biancamaria Fontana, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988.

speech and only speech made sense and where central concern of all citizens was to talk with each other¹.

Therefore, an individual life or private one meant for ancient Greeks, to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others, to be deprived of an "objective" relationship with them through the intermediary of a common world of things, to be deprived of the possibility of achieving something more permanent than life itself.

The privation of the individual life lies, in the ancient Greek's thought, in the absence of others; as far as they are concerned, private man does not exist². In the word of Benjamin Constant, among the ancients the individual, almost always sovereign in public affair, was a slave in all his private relations³. In such an environment a man defined himself and his identity was fixed in terms of a limited set of clearly defined social roles and functions. Because the individuals' path in life is laid out for them, their opportunities for choice are narrowly circumscribed and they become so dependent on the norms and traditions of their group that they never grow accustomed to making their own choices, to pursuing their own lines of activity.

We can conclude by noticing that in ancient Greek thought, personal identity has a strong collective dimension and primarily, signifies the excellence of performing in public life. This was the spirit of ancient Greek age and the way that modernity conceives private identity as individualism was discovered as the opposite of the social and the political sphere⁴.

Reconstruction of Identity in the Liberal Discourse

The decisive historical fact, which shifted emphasis from the collective identity to the personal one, was brought by the modern period and its theorist, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. He was not interested in this dichotomy, but he discovered a special intimacy of individuals, which allows building a personal identity outside the collective one. He arrived at his discovery through a rebellion, not against the oppression of the state but against society's unbearable perversion of the human heart, its intrusion upon an innermost region in man, which until then had needed no special protection. For Hannah Arendt, "the modern individual and his endless conflicts, his inability either to be at home in society or to live outside it was born in this rebellion of the heart"⁵. But much more important than that

¹ See ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1142 a. 25, in IDEM, *The Complete Works*, ed. by J. Barnes, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984.

² See Hannah ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1974, p. 58.

³ Benjamin CONSTANT, *Political Writings*, cit.

⁴ For more details about this topics see, Leo STRAUSS, *The City and the Man*, The University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1964; Fustel DE COULANGES, *The Ancient City: A Study on the Religions, Laws and Institutions of Greece and Rome*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1980; C.J. GILL, "Plato and Politics: the Critias and the Politicus", *Phronesis*, 24, 1979, pp. 148-167; Claude MOSSÉ, *Politique et société en Grèce Antique. Le «modèle» athénien*, Aubier-Montaigne, Paris, 1998; Jennifer TOLBERT ROBERTS, *Athens on Trial. The Antidemocratic Tradition in Western Thought*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994.

⁵ Hannah ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, cit., p. 39.

is the fact that the rebellious reaction against society was directed first of all against the levelling demands of conformist inherent in every society. Therefore, the old paradigm of a society (nation) in which its members act as they are members of one enormous family, which has only one opinion was challenged by the political doctrine of liberalism.

Another paradigm has changed. As we have seen, in ancient Greece the understanding of community was expressed by the term *demos* (Aristotle). The Latin word *populus* expresses another concept, which gets more substance in modern age¹. Namely, the Italian *popolo*, and its equivalents, *peuple*, *Volk*, show an organic unity, a whole body, which can be express by one general will (in Romanticist conception – *Volkgeist*). The Greek *demos*, sum of separate opinions, is equivalent to a poliarchy. At this point, the liberal doctrine and nationalism are different and implies distinct discourses.

Liberalism keeps the Greek meaning of community (seen as a *demos*) to which it brings a more tolerant essence. The individual was no longer conceived as being immovably tied to one or two groups – an extended family, a church, a village community, a manor or a guild. As Charles Frankel said, the liberal doctrine urges to release the individual from unalterable dependence on any particular social group², inclusive, the national one.

At the beginning of this article, we have seen that nationalism was a democratic project, a result of what we call as being democracy. Democracy supposes the sovereignty of the people and therefore, the same people should be free to choose the type of the state in which they want to live. In this democratic process, people became nation and their choice was the national state. Meanwhile, democracy is not confounded with liberalism³ for which one of the central political values is freedom of individuals. As Giovanni Sartori wrote, the fundamental difference is that liberalism points out the individual and democracy stresses the society⁴. From society to national society, the road is very short and it was easily covered by nationalism.

The liberal concept of man implied a human being seen as an individual, as an autonomous moral agent, endowed with the capacity of self-determination, capable of pursuing his own good in his own way. In an individualistic society man should become conscious of himself as a person and can begin to ask himself such questions as "how shall I live?" or "what is the best life for me"? His identity has become personal: instead of being in large measure simply the bearer of a few well-defined social roles carrying fixed responsibilities he is more and more obliged to make up his own mind in the face of the competing attractions of alternative opinions and differing ways of life.

One of the most serious contribution in defining personal identity was made a by the liberal John Stuart Mill. In his 1859 *On Liberty*, Mill refined the classical assumptions of liberty by underlying the central role of the free development of human individuality. His thesis pointed out the importance of preserving the natural

¹ See Giovanni SARTORI, *A Theory of Democracy...cit.*, p. 46.

² Charles FRANKEL, *The Case for Modern Man*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1959.

³ For the term liberalism, we use the meaning of what Giovanni Sartori (*A Theory of Democracy...cit.*) stated as being "the theory and the juridical practice which protect the political freedom and the individual freedom of people".

⁴ *Ibidem*.

differences, which exist between individuals and the tendencies towards uniformity raised by public opinion. More precisely, the individuals must be protected against will of the society or state to impose its determination over them. The people should have their right to conduct their destiny according to their personal opinions and desires. Public opinion via its collective mediocrity has a predisposition to burden the free spontaneity of individuals and their initiatives. Thus, according to Mill, neither one person, nor any number of persons, is warranted in saying to another human creature of ripe years that he shall not do with his life for his own benefit what he choose to do with it. He is the person most interested in his own well-being: the interest that any other person, except in cases of strong personal attachment, can have in it, is trifling, compared with that which he himself has; the interest which society has in him individually (except as to his conduct to others) is fractional, and altogether indirect: while, with respect to his own feelings and circumstances, the most ordinary man or woman has means of knowledge immeasurably surpassing those that can be possessed by any one else. One can notice that Mill absorbed the Romantic belief that each man possesses a peculiar and in-born endowment, which might not be realised, in the course of his life. But in spite of the claim that individuals have natures or essences, Mill makes no claim about the general properties of human nature. What is for sure, it remained the fact that Mill does not take into consideration the national identity like being a main component of personal identity. Precisely, as John Gray reconstructed¹, in Mill's theory, human beings are understood to be engaged in recurrently revising the forms of life and modes of experience which they have inherited and by which "human nature" itself is constituted at in any given time and place. Now, it becomes intelligible that Mill saw the personal identity, not in terms of the mass manufacture of any one type of human being, but as the promotion of the growth of the powers and capacities of autonomous thought and action.

This is the classical discourse of modern liberalism about personal identity. It was competed by the other main ideology of 19th century, namely by nationalism.

NEGOTIATIONS OF FREEDOM

Preliminary Remarks

The old paradigm of collective identity was challenged by the liberal discourse, which proposed another concept of identity, namely, personal identity. This notion was based on the liberal creed according to that individual freedom is the supreme political value and an essential requirement for leading a truly human existence. On the other hand, liberal ideology presents a fragmented world, which consists of isolated individuals who don't communicate with each other. What liberal discourse disregards is the fact that individuals are always caught in a social context. Moreover, in confrontation with the fear of death, the national ideology had an answer much more suitable for human beings than liberalism. As Benedict Anderson noticed, death brings the threat of oblivion. In a secular age we

¹ John GRAY, *Mill On Liberty: A Defence*, 2nd edition, Routledge, London, 1996, p. 85.

increasingly look to posterity to keep our memory alive, and the collective memory and solidarity of the nation helps us to overcome the threat of oblivion. Nations are characterised by symbols of commemoration, notably the Tombs of Unknown Soldiers. Without name or known remains, these tombs are filled with "ghostly national imaginings. In this sense, nationalism transformed fatality into continuity by liking the dead and yet unborn"¹. The nation is particularly suited to this "secular transformation of fatality into continuity, contingency into meaning"². One can assert that the nation was the new religion of individuals, the new formula of solidarity and identity for modern times, the new way of being together in various human communities. According to Lucian Boia, the nation was not only conceived as a concept or as a political system but also a religion as well, charged with cardinal symbols and transcendent substances³. Therefore, all of humanity consists of national entities and the human history will be fulfilled, in its universality, via each nation and the individuals can be fully realised only inside the nation as a small part of the collective destiny⁴.

We analyse in the following three sections, the phenomenon of nationalism, by presenting it in its first historical paradigm (as an outcome of democracy) and then by comparing it with two totalitarian political regimes (national-socialist, and national communism).

First Negotiation of Freedom (Nationalism)

Nationalism conceived as the ideology that promotes national identity can be seen as distinct fragments of the same text, namely, as a negotiation of freedom in various fields and at different levels.

First, nationalism is a negotiation of freedom because it deals with fundamental aspects of liberty at the personal or collective level. Our approach to nationalism starts from two different angles: the first is the one employed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *The Social Contract*, where the following postulates may be found: sovereignty belongs to the people and there is no other legitimate authority apart from the one elected by citizens; the second one belongs to Johann Gottfried Herder that published between 1784 and 1791 his *Ideas of Philosophy of the Human History*, in which he stated that mankind consists of nations, each one having a well defined character, its spirit, its language and its fate in the world. This was what later on, the theorists of nationalism called the dichotomy between a civic/political/contractual and an ethnic/cultural conception of the nation. Today it is considered the most convenient device for distinguishing between the varieties of nationalism that are deemed compatible with the basic framework of a liberal-democratic regime and others that are seen as a potential way to an authoritarian regime.

The two terms of the dichotomy go under various names but most authors agree that, whatever word is used, the ideas are always the same. The civic nation is an association, which can be theoretically reconstructed on the model of the

¹ Anthony D. SMITH, *Nationalism and Modernism*, cit.

² Benedict ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities*, cit., p. 11.

³ Lucian BOIA, *Două secole de mitologie națională*, Humanitas, București, 1999, p. 11.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

social contract. It is constituted by virtue of the individuals' agreement to comply by certain shared values that are constantly renegotiated in public life. The ethnic nation is constituted by a combination of elements that stand beyond the individualists' volition or control, like descent, languages or religion. According to a recent contribution, the opposition is between a concept of the nation that is "artificial, universalistic and [...] individualist" and another one that is "particularistic, collectivist, and organicist"¹.

However, although it seems unproblematic, the civic-ethnic distinction carries with it a great array of confusion, which it is employed in political argumentation. As such, a danger exists that it could act as the very opposite to what it has originally been intended for it might hamper the building of democracies in the region instead of supporting it.

Our first argument is related to the way the two varieties of nationalism are located on the map of the world civilisation. It is customary not only to consider that there have occurred in history two basic ways of conceiving the nation, but also to look at civic nationalism and ethnic conceptions as defining characteristic of the Western and non-Western cultures. The cardinal point of this dichotomy is a comparison between the French and the German views of national identity. In the aftermath of the war of 1870, Ernest Renan and Heinrich von Treitschke argued over the ambiguous nationality of the inhabitants of Alsace and Lorraine. The Frenchman claimed them on behalf of his country by virtue of their explicit consent, while the German insisted that their Germanianness is proved by their blood, language and customs. Although at that time the Germans got the two provinces for the following five decades, the ideological battle was won by the French: Renan's essay, *What is a Nation* of 1882 – with its famous definition of a nation as "a daily plebiscite"² was to establish itself very soon as the canonical expression of the civic conception. The German conception was accordingly consecrated as remnant of tribalism and a hinder to political modernisation.

The practice of considering the civic conception of the nation as confined to the Western world and the ethnic conception as universally spread over the rest of the world has become a commonplace in the post war decades. It acquired perhaps the most influential expression in a book written by the American historian of Czech origin Hans Kohn³, as well as in his subsequent writings, but was accepted by many other authors. Recent works have challenged this opposition between Western and Eastern nationalism, arguing that, rather being a characteristic of the non-Western countries, the ethnic conception can be found alongside the civic one, in nationalistic rhetoric all over the world. In the words of a Polish historian: "It would not be too difficult for a critic of Kohn's theory to demonstrate that all the characteristics which he regards as specific to Central and Eastern European nationalism, could also be found in Western Europe"⁴. At the same time, the ethnic

¹ Brian C.J. SINGER, "Cultural versus Contractual Nations: Rethinking Their Opposition", *History and Theory*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1996, pp. 310-311.

² Ernest RENAN, "What Is a Nation?", in Geoff ELEY, Ronald Grigor SUNY (eds.), *Becoming National: A Reader*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 41-55.

³ Hans KOHN, *The Idea of Nationalism. A Study in Its Origins and Background*, Macmillan, New York, 1944.

⁴ Andrej WALICKI, *The Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Nationhood. Polish Political Thought from Noble Republicanism to Tadeuz Kosciuszko*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1989, p. 5.

conception has not always been the dominant one in the East. The same author argued that Polish nationalism was shaped in the late 18th century, along the lines of the conception of political nation, embodied in the commonwealth of the nobles.

These two types of nationalism are succeeding each other in almost all of the national contexts. Thus, some writers have identified cycles of cultural nationalism in the countries of civic tradition and cycles of civic nationalism in the countries of ethnic tradition¹. Moreover, some authors have not only argued that two varieties of nationalism can and do coexist with each other, but that they must occur together, to the benefit of political order. The civic-ethnic dualism within the same national context corresponds to the basic dualism between society and state. The emergence of the discourse of cultural nationalism alongside the civic one appears, as a rediscovery of society, which "slips out from under the policy and acquires a properly societal substance"².

We shall make a distinction between the nation conceived along the civic model and the body of citizenship. At the most abstract level, the civic-ethnic distinction can be reformulated as the distinction between subjective and objective criteria for defining the national group. In the first model, we can be said to belong to a nation only if we think ourselves as belonging to it, that is, by virtue of an act of consent of our subjective will. There are no objective traits to stamp us forever as members of this nation, or to deny our access to another one.

In the second model, an individual is part of the nation irrespective of his will, and by virtue of some objective characteristics, as blood, language, or religion. Not having precisely those characteristics that are considered as defining for a distinct nation can ban the individual's acceptance to it, no matter his eagerness to obtain this acceptance.

A very sharp expression of this way of conceiving national belonging is offered by the writings of the Romanian philosopher Nae Ionescu. Discussing the claims of the Greek-Catholics to recommend themselves as Romanians, he concluded that, in departing from the Orthodox faith, they have lost contact with the true sources of Romanianess. Even an important Greek-Catholic intellectual like Samuil Micu, who offered essential works for the strengthening of Romanian nationality as such – being one of those who disclosed the Latin origins of the Romanians – cannot be considered a member of Romanian nation. He can be granted at most honorific title of a "good Romanian" but not the status of a Romanian simply³.

However, the practice of using of concepts like "civic" or "political" for designating the nation defined by subjective criteria has led to the common practice of equating it with the corpus of citizens. This confusion comes mostly from French tradition of nationalist thought and from the common mistake of adopting French case as a model with universal relevance. From Rousseau and Sieyès, through Renan, to contemporary authors like Pierre Manent⁴ there has been a constant tendency in France to equate the quality of French citizen with belonging to French

¹ John HUTCHINSON, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism. The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish National State*, Allen and Unwin, London, 1987; for an approach of American case, see Michael BILING, *Banal Nationalism*, Sage Publications, London, 1995.

² Brian C.J. SINGER, "Cultural versus Contractual Nations...cit.", p. 329.

³ Nae IONESCU, *Roza Vânturilor 1926-1933*, 2nd edition, Editura Roza Vânturilor, București, 1990, pp. 194-198 (first ed. by Mircea Eliade, *Cultura Națională*, București, 1937).

⁴ Pierre MANENT, "La démocratie sans la nation?", *Commentaire*, no. 75, 1996, pp. 569-575.

nation. The British, by contrast, succeeded in more carefully observation of the difference between nation and state, citizenship and nationality. The fundamental texts of British reflection the national issue are John Stuart Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government*¹ of 1864 and Lord Acton's essay *Nationality*, of the following year-start from the empirical observation that national groups transcend state boundaries. Mill advocates the principal of national self-determination and argues that there are strong reasons why nation and state should be made conterminous. Among these reasons, Mill underlines community of language, religion and political antecedents. About last reason, Mill thought that it is the most important one because it signifies collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past. Nevertheless, Mill said that none of these circumstances are either indispensable or necessarily sufficient by themselves. In this respect, the Belgian example is relevant. In Mill's words,

"the Flemish and the Walloon provinces of Belgium, notwithstanding diversity of race and language, have a much greater feeling of common nationality than the former have with Holland, or the latter with France"².

On the other hand, Acton argues the opposite case, condemning the principle of the national state as a form of utopian politics.

To summarise, it is not our intention, either to deny the features of non-Western political cultures that are not conducive to democracy, or to prevent a critical inquiry of the model of the national state. Still, it seems obvious to us that in order to be effective a discourse has to sound credible and has to be examined from all points of view. We think that the idea of the civic nation has something artificial on it as long as it is associated with a rigid West-East dichotomy. We incline to give credit to the democratic nationalism, which agrees to take the idea of nation in seriously, accepting that it has relevance for the political philosophy. On the other hand, it is reasonable to argue that, in most cases, it is impossible to make body of citizenship conterminous with the national group, while it is still possible to persuade the national group to embrace "a civic", that is "inclusive" conception of the nation.

Regardless of this classical dichotomy, a historical fact is evident: nationalism has as *modus operandi* the general assumption that every individual must become a faithful citizen of his nation and must learn "*amour sacré de la patrie*" (la Marseillaise), its history (an oriented, interpreted and adapted history) and all the myths and symbols that underline the unity of the national spirit against other nationalities.

The national project created uniformity exactly where the social and cultural differences were very sensitive. In other words, the nationalist solution tries to sink individual identity within a collective identity, namely the national one. In this paradigm, the individuals take their identity from a cultural community³. The difficult question of "who I am" got a relatively facile answer. As Brendan O' Leary put it, nationalism implies that loyalty to the nation should be the first virtue of a citizen. This implies that loyalty to the national community should transcend loyalty

¹ John Stuart MILL, *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, and Consideration on Representative Government*, J.M. Dent & Sons, London, 1972, pp. 359-366.

² *Ibidem*, p. 360.

³ Anthony D. SMITH, *National Identity. Ethnonationalism in Comparative Perspective*, University of Nevada Press, Reno, 1991.

to more particular identifications, personal, cultural, economic or political¹. Based on these presumptions, it raised a movement, nationalism, which pointed out the separate destiny of a particular community.

The nationalist doctrine pushes minorities to a marginal area, trying to wipe what was particular to another group, making homogeneous countries in which citizens must speak the same language. Therefore, the national minorities were strongly affected, much more than they were during the "imperial system" when no politics of assimilation existed, especially because empires were not national states. Some examples from European history may be relevant. The Ottoman Empire, e.g., the least developed state among the European ones, was in one sense, an example of "ethnic democracy" because it was neither democratic nor national. Turks, Armenians, Greeks and Jews were part of the administrative and political system before national ideology and national state. Later on, in nationalist Turkey, the Armenians "disappeared", then the Greeks were chased away or changed with the Turk from Greece.

Moving to Scandinavia, today Finland is a model country when it comes with the protection of national minorities. The Swedish language is spoken by only 6% of the whole population but it has an equal status with the Finnish one, the language of the majority. But around 1900, Swedish people represented 14% of the population and this language was spoken also in main Finnish towns. In conclusion, 50% of the Swedes left Finland, and today the Swedish language is strictly spoken only by this minority located at the border. It is evident that we must distinguish between various types of assimilation, such as between cultural or administrative ways (the Finnish manner) on the one hand and "methods" like expulsion and genocide (Turkish practice) on the other one, but the results are the same: comparing with the year 1900, all present European countries are much more homogeneous from an ethnic and linguistic perspective.

Moreover, this process was more radical in Central and Eastern Europe not only because of the deficit of democracy but also because of a tremendous mixture of different ethnicity. Some data are relevant in this sense. In 1910, Czechs represented 63,4% of the population and Germans 35%. In 1930, the Czechs grew at 68% and the Germans remained at 29,5%. In 1950, a dramatic change took place: 93,8% of population represents Czechs and only 1,8% Germans.

In Poland, after 1918, 10% of the population were Jews. During the inter-war period, most of them disappeared together with 8 millions Germans. Today, Poland is a compact nation without any notable national minority.

Romanians represented in 1930 71,9% of the total population. Until 1992, their percentage grew up to 89,5% (German population and other ethnical groups have immigrated during the communist period).

We can conclude by saying that the ideology of the nation, regardless of its type (the civic nationalism or ethnic one) nationalism did not only mean freedom but wars. It created a fragmented and conflicting world and finally, it was incorporated in the two totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, national socialist and communism.

¹ Brendan O'LEARY, "Ernest Gellner's Diagnoses of Nationalism: A Critical View, What Is Living and What Is Dead in Ernest Gellner's Philosophy of Nationalism?", in John A. HALL (ed.), *The State and the Nation. Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, p. 70.

The Second Negotiation of Freedom (National-Socialist Regime)

As negotiation of freedom, nationalism forged a public behaviour that can be discerned at the institutional level and that provides enough details for discerning if one or another political regime can be considered a liberal democracy or a totalitarian one. As much as individuals identify themselves as members of one political body in which their rights and freedoms are based, the state acquires a democratic shape. On the other hand, as much as individuals consider themselves as members of a tribe, deriving their rights from the blood heritage, (the Kymlicka exclusive nationalism¹) the road to serfdom is open.

Concerning National-Socialism, it is worth noticing that this doctrine has an important nationalistic component though these two ideologies must not be confused. If in the liberal doctrine, the liberty gave the to the individuals the opportunity to pursue their own interests by exercising choice, the choice of where to live, who to work, what to buy and so forth and being the only condition in which people are able to develop their skills and talents and fulfil their potential², in the Nazi vision, each individual is a cell belonging to the giant organism that is the people. The destiny of this organism is also the destiny of every individual. Therefore, the most important thing is *Volksgemeinschaft* – "community of the people". On the other hand, in the Nazi point of view, the nation does not include everybody who was born inside the German borders but only the ones who belong to a specific group or race, part of the German *Volk*. From the beginning, Nazism as an ideology was based on the idea that the race is a very characteristic element in defining a human being. Belonging to a race represents an inexorable quintessential attribute of every individual. There is no "universal human nature" because the differences, which make it possible to distinguish between races, mark for each of them a role to play³ or a distinct destiny in the world.

As a matter of fact, this ideology did not bring anything new, once the racist theories were formulated many years ago, especially in the 19th century. The most influential thinker in this respect was Joseph-Arthur de Gobineau who discovered that "the engine of history" is not the Marxist class struggle but race struggle. More precisely, Gobineau asserted that the reason why so powerful empires disappeared at some point in history was because of the mixture of different races. Therefore, a group of people is strong only when its ethnical composition remains pure. Moreover, the ethnical races were not created equal, the white colour of skin being better label for quality than a yellow or black one. In the national-socialist doctrine, the Arian race is the most pure and superior among the others and deserves a major destiny. In this point lies the cardinal difference between an ideology such as Nazism and, on the other side, nationalism.

Even though Friedrich von Schlegel was the first one who in 1820 argued in favour of a cultural link between the old Gothic language and Sanskrit, formulating

¹ Will KYMLICKA, *Multicultural Citizenship*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 107.

² Andrew HEYWOOD, "Liberalism", in IDEM, *Political Ideologies. An Introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1992, pp. 15-52.

³ See Terence BALL, Richard DAGGER, *Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal*, Harper Collins, New York, 2nd edition, 1995, p. 193.

for the first time the term *Arian people*¹, German romanticism and its thinkers (Schlegel, Fichte, Herder) plead for the recognition of all nations. From their perspective, all the nations have a great value because every one brings in the world something distinctive and unique. If each individual life needs to be part and gets value from and in the nation, the nationalist ideology asserts that its doctrine must be an ideal for every nation. Therefore, compared with national-socialism, nationalism ideology has a strong democratic component.

The Third Negotiation of Freedom (Communism)

Nationalism is a negotiation of freedom at the level of the private sphere of individuals for the principal reason that it debates the most genuine relation between human beings, namely, the self-identification of individuals equally as entities of the same community and as separate and independent persons. Paradoxically, some components of nationalism were absorbed by the communist ideology, in spite of its international character of the last one. Before seeing which are these components it is worth noticing that when it comes to totalitarian regimes, we are dealing with "closed societies in which individual destinies are not the result of a number of personal and free choices but the outcome of a pre-established framework with communitarian finalities"².

The lack of freedom mixed with nationalism made possible national-socialism or communism. As a common feature but from different perspectives, both totalitarian regimes aim at modifying human personality. If the former ended in mass genocide, communism aimed at achieving something extra: the "re-education" of mass society, namely a brainwash of its individuals consisting of "a level, standardised mentality, collectivist spirit, gregarious behaviour and distrust in the values of liberalism"³. This social engineering modified the individuality of people mainly by destroying their freedom. While in the liberal doctrine, the individuals take their decisions in conformity with their own free choices, the communist utopia set up as a certain task, namely, the edification of the bright future of humanity. Therefore, under the socialism in general and, particularly in Soviet-type societies, the individual is organically and hierarchically committed to the social sphere embodied by the state. The individual destiny is melt, programmatically and practically, in the greatness of the global project of the communist society, and the bright future of humanity must have pre-eminence in the face of the concrete of everyday life. There was no room for private destiny once the public sphere and its important objectives took a great predominance before private one and its autonomy of the individuals. Under state socialism, fidelity was not pledged to an idea but to a symbolic collectively conceived in homogenous and monolithic terms: party, people, working class or socialist nation. If nationalism is predicted

¹ See Shlomo AVINERI, "Hegel and Nationalism", in Walter KAUFMANN, *Hegel's Political Philosophy*, Atherton Books, New York, 1970, p. 111.

² Karl POPPER, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1952.

³ Daniel BARBU, "From Hard Communism to Soft Populism. Some Remarks on the Romanian Cultures of Nationhood", *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review*, vol. I, no. 3, 2001, pp. 713-731.

upon the assumption that the most fundamental decisions of humankind are the many cleavages that divide people into ethnic groups, Marxism, by contrast, rest upon the conviction that the most fundamental human divisions are horizontal class distinctions that cut cross national groupings¹.

But even though according to Marx "the working class does not have a country" the real communism had to live inside the national borders. Once, the dream of the world revolution was sweep off, the Russians succeeded to identify the aspirations of international working class with the soviet values and interests². Therefore, the ideology of communism has acquired two different faces: an internationalist and a nationalist one. According to Walker Connor later on the Marxists

"not only learned to accommodate themselves to an expediential coexistence with the world filled with nationalism, but they also developed a strategy to manipulate nationalism into the service of Marxism"³.

Generally speaking, communism could not survive without the last *façade*. Failing in economic and social fields, the nationalistic discourse was the only one, which could influence a disoriented and starved population. As every utopia, national-communism soon manifested an isolationist vocation, materialised by the fear of the others whose became diabolic and dangerous. Later on, the soviet model was taken by the other socialist states. Thus, inside communist world were built various walls and different conflicts raised (USSR-Yugoslavia, USSR-China, USSR-Romania, USSR-Czechoslovakia, Hungary-Romania, Hungary-Slovakia, etc).

It was a strange development for an internationalist doctrine, as the communist one, comparing to "capitalist world", which became, during the same period, more homogeneous and friendly in relation with the neighbours (e.g. the creation of European Economic Community).

A part of USSR, this smoothly slide toward nationalism was much accentuated in countries like Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia or East Germany (in which historiography, e.g. Frederic the Greatest, the King of Prussia, became the father and the founder of that communist state entity). In Romania after 1971, Ceaușescu's regime made from nationalism the supreme historical and political argument for the subordination of individuals to the communist state and its single party. As a main tool of domination and legitimisation, nationalism took advantages from the mixture between an authentic nationalist tradition and the specific objectives of communist dictatorship. At the beginning it seemed that it was recuperation, but in reality it was a manipulation.

The extent of the national deviation is best seen in the Communist Party Programme of 1974, which decidedly had more of a national than a Marxist-Leninist ring. It began with a twenty-five page account of what the General Secretary described in a preface as "the two thousands year old history of our people" prior to the party's assumption of power. As Walker Connor noticed:

"The fact that the beginning date of this history precedes the creation of the party (1921) by some two millennia is significant, for the party's *raison d'être*

¹ Walker CONNOR, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984.

² Lucian BOIA, *La Mythologie scientifique du communisme*, Paradigme, Caen-Orléans, 1993.

³ Walker CONNOR, *The National Question...cit.*, p. 6.

was expressed in the program solely in relation to Romanian national history. By its action during World War II, the party was said to have established its right to take over the leadership of the Romanian people, thus fulfilling its historic mission of defending the national interests of the entire people"¹.

As an immediate result, Ceaușescu's nationalism accentuated the isolationism and the cultural megalomania. At the same time, covered by nationalism, the communist dictatorship pretended that the critics of the totalitarian system are betrayers of the nation and national interests. Critics of Ceaușescu's regime were considered enemies of the whole nation once the ideology of the regime declared the communist dictator among the greatest Romanian kings and rulers.

In communist-nationalistic propaganda, Ceaușescu was compared to the ancient Dacian king Burebista and to the king of the feudal principality of Walachia, Mircea the Oldest or to Michael the Brave. Amazing in this case were the discrepancies between an idealised past and the poor communist realities, between the vulgarity of Ceaușescu and the mythical personages who were invoked.

Nationalism as A Variety of Modernism

There are other approaches of the phenomenon of nationalism, among them an important weight having the Marxism one. As we saw before, in the Marxist approach, nationalism is not a result of a popular movement, but it is an action of the bourgeois or intelligentsia towards the masses. More precisely, the nation was explained as a historically evolved phenomenon that comes into existence only with the demise of feudalism and the rise of capitalism. On the other hand, for Marx the support for nationalistic forces during a "progressive phase" in their history was quite acceptable behaviour. In other words, Communist may support any movement, nationalist or otherwise, when the movement represents the most progressive alternative but they must remain above nationalism, this immunity being their single defining characteristic. Whether progressive or reactionary, nationalism is everywhere a bourgeois ideology pressed into service by that class in order to divert the proletariat from realising its own class consciousness and interests and therefore, nationalism is an ephemeral phenomenon which will not survive capitalism.

After the nationalistic movements of 1848, one can see a shift in the writings of Marx (and Engels) in their classical paradigm towards an increased awareness of the power of nationalism. Especially Engels was heavily influenced by the national concepts when he distinguished between the forceful annexation of people aimed at "the uniting of scattered and related ethnic groups [...] and naked conquest by force of foreign territories, with robbery pure and simple"².

As a result of Marx's failure to address himself directly to the issue of nationalism and thus resolve the many ambiguities and inconsistencies concerning its place in the Marxist scheme of things, Lenin came to appreciate even far more than had Marx or Engels, the tactical wisdom of an ostensible alliance with national

¹ *Ibidem*, p. 561.

² Friedrich ENGELS, "The Foreign Policy of Russian Czarism" (1890), in Paul W. BLACKSTOCK, Bart F. HOSELITZ (eds.), *Russian Menace to Europe*, George Unwin and Allen, London, 1953, p. 39.

forces. In this sense it is worth noticing that the program of the Second International, as endorsed by the London Conference of 1896, noted that "the Congress declares that it upholds the full right of self-determination for all nations"¹. Moreover, Lenin made clear that national self-determination included the right of political secession. This was in theory (probably a dialectical one) since Lenin made the second distinction between the abstract right to self-determination, which is enjoyed by all nations, and the right to exercise that right, which are evidently not the same. The question of support in a specific instance was left to the Communist Party and its members. Conversely, in many Communist countries, their totalitarian parties, in their fight for power, sought the support of minorities by promising them self-determination, including the right of secession. Finally, despite very important variations in political platforms, each Communist party, once in power, denied the right of secession to its minorities. One example in this sense can be relevant. The region called Bessarabia (today, Republic of Moldova) had been annexed by tsarist Russia in 1812. After the dissolution of the Tsarist Empire, in April 1918 this region was part of Romania until 1940 when the Soviets, assured of German acquiescence by the Nazi-Soviet Pact, retook the area by ultimatum. As Walker Connor noticed:

"The Soviet government brushed aside the Romanian government's plead that the political allegiance of the people be determined by plebiscite and when Soviet forces reoccupied the area in 1944, talk of a right of self-determination² was not heard. The Soviets were well aware that their attempt to employ the slogan of a national self-determination to create an artificial division of the Romanian nation had made few converts and numerous opponents, as witness the exceptional weakness of the Communist apparatus throughout Romania, including Bessarabia, during the inter-war period. The Soviet had achieved their goal by military conquest rather than through a 'Moldavian Nationalism'³.

Another Marxist theory is the one of Tom Nairn who asserts that even though there have been nationalities and ethnic identities before the modern period, the key factor of nationalism remained the unbalanced development of capitalism. From his perspective, the nationalism derives from a violent imposition of capitalism by Western bourgeoisie on undeveloped and backward regions of the world. On a further level, the spread of nationalism is derived from the class consequences of the uneven diffusion of capitalism. The new middle-class intelligentsia of nationalism had to invite the masses into history; and the invitation-card had to be written in a language they understood⁴. One can notice that the support of the right to self-determination by Marxist-Leninist doctrine was more a demagogy than a real objective of its political platform. Tom Nairn conclusion is that intelligentsia constructs a national culture out of the prehistoric qualities and archaic

¹ *Apud* Walker CONNOR, *The National Question...cit.*, p. 30.

² The concept of self-determination was in fact only used to bring artificial divisions of a nation by simply asserting that the Romanians who lived in the area of Bessarabia (Republic of Moldova) were not Romanians at all.

³ Walker CONNOR, *The National Question...cit.*, p. 179.

⁴ Tom NAIRN, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, New Left Books, London, 1977, p. 340.

naturalness of popular cultures, that is, all those customs, myths, folklore and symbols which romanticism created with so much passion.

Two contra-arguments were made by Anthony D. Smith concerning Tom Nairn's theory:

- if the nationalism emerges simply from the confrontation of an inter-class community with outside forces of domination than which is the role of ethnic communities in this process? Asserting that their role is reduced to furnished some materials for the construction of modern nations by intelligentsia does not explain why some nationalism are religious, others secular, some are moderate, others aggressive, some are authoritarian and others more democratic;

- this theory failed to explain why the industrial capitalism did not always spread the diffusion of nationalism. In this sense, relatively well developed regions (like Silesia or Piedmont, for example) or underdeveloped areas such as Northeast of England or Crete, Southern of Italy failed to develop a separate nationalism¹.

Another example which does not confirm Nairn's theory, is the raise of Romanian nationalism in Transylvania. In this sense, it is worth noticing that the Romanian intellectuals from this part of the Habsburg Empire (at that time) were not engaged in any class struggle or battle for the economic supremacy of the political environment of that time. In this respect, among other reasons for raising Romanian nationalistic movement in Transylvania, an important one was played by the way, in which it was performing the Hungarian politics via national minorities that existed in this geographical area. Finally, one can notice a failure of many socio-economic regions to coincide with particular ethnic communities, or the lack of any connection between economy and the appearance of a national action, enough reasons for the superfluous thesis of the economic disparities translated into nationalist movement. The Marxist's claim that nationalism will not survive capitalism was not proved correct.

Another Marxist approach that completed the previous ones was made by Miroslav Hroch who noticed a chronological progression from elite to mass involvement in nationalism mobilisation. In this sense, Hroch distinguished three main phases²:

- the period of scholarly interest in which a reduced circle of intellectuals rediscovers the national culture and past and formulates the idea of the nation;
- the period of patriotic agitation in which various activists spread the nationalistic ideas in growing society;
- the rise of a mass national movement in which a tremendous popular involvement in nationalism appeared.

The following important distinction in Hroch's theory concerns the periods of nationalism. In his opinion there are two historical stages. First is the period of struggle against absolutism, bourgeois social revolution and the rise of capitalism. The second period is the one after "the victory of capitalism" and coincides in Hroch's opinion with "the rise of working-class movement".

Why is necessary to have these historical stages of nationalism once Hroch already discerns three main phases of the chronological progression of nationalism?

¹ Anthony D. SMITH, *Nationalism and Modernism*, cit., p. 51.

² Miroslav HROCH, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe, A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985, p. 22.

In his theory Hroch ascertains that it is necessary to complete the chronological phases of nationalism with the historical stages (which seems to be stages of capitalism rather than of nationalism) because phases B (the period of national agitation) cannot explain primarily the origin of the modern nation and the birth of nationalist movement.

In his words, identical forms of agitation, identical patriotic manifestation, led to very different results among the different nationalities and nowhere was very sufficient by themselves to bring the national movement successfully into its mass phase¹. Thus, the neo-Marxist approach takes into consideration other processes such as agrarian revolution, industrialisation and especially "social transformation at the threshold of capitalist society".

In Hroch's opinion, the nation is not a homogeneous class or social group with the same interests and unless the interest of a specific class or group is conceived as being the national interest, the road from Phase B to Phase C (the rise of a mass national movement) is banned.

It is important to notice that, for the same author, an agitation carried on under the exclusive banner of language, national literature, or other super-structural attributes such as history, folklore, is not possible to reach a mass national movement.

Generally speaking, the Marxist conclusion sustains that the origin of the nation cannot be explained without reference to the changes in the sphere of society, politics and economics.

The core of Benedict Anderson's theory is that what in a positive sense made the new communities imaginable was a half-fortuitous, but explosive interaction between a system of production and productive relations (capitalism), a technology of communication (print), and the fatality of human linguistic diversity². What is important in Anderson's opinion remains the element of fatality – of both, death and linguistic diversity but also the interaction between these fatalities and the new mode of production and technology. His perspective about nationalism is different from the Marxist approach, even though he underscores that capitalism has played a crucial role in "assembling" print-languages, within definite grammatical and syntactical limits, from the immense variety of related vernaculars or idioms.

¹ *Ibidem*, p. 178.

² Benedict ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities*, cit., pp. 42 *et seq.*