

On Re-Constructing the National Identity

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Abstract:

The process of constructing a national identity goes through a set of formulas that suggest a particular given definition based on different belongings and perspectives. Deciding on a definition of a nation reveals the extent to which definitions are perceived as suggestive, but not finite endings. The present article debates the national identity construction and discusses the broader sources of approaching national belonging. The article's objectives target a review of the distinction between the factual and mythical formulation of the concept. It also decodes the basics which a national identity is constructed upon. In light of the postmodern theoretical background, the article examines and reintroduces the conceptualisation of a nation taking into consideration the systematic process over which the nation has ended up being approached similarly. Structurally, the article, first, dissects the primordial pillars of proving a nation's existence. Consecutively, it scrutinises the foundational dependances in drawing the bottom lines throughout the national construction. The article's concluding debates on broaching the minorities' re-articulation of the national identity. The paper results in the incredibility of the defining process which imposes certain criteria to confine given notions. It also closes with a suggestion to reframe the national correspondence that leaves room for minor representations to articulate their positions in an attempt to build up a national identity.

Keywords: identity, nation, community, re-articulation, ideology.

Introduction:

To belong to a nation, one presumably and unconsciously adopts a predisposed set of concepts, conceptualisations as well as daily allegiances. The definition of a subject to a set of rules and limitations results in an overgeneralising view towards a subject. One cannot be seen as a totality since the observer would be accused of forcing concepts and daily tasks a culture exercises that are barely associated with the conceptualisation of a unique subject. Identification of identity belonging takes a scrutinised and deeply analysed view of one's identity or reflections of their identity. Community subjects can only refer to themselves by themselves and any other attempt to fuse a subject to a set of norms can be but a violation of their being and their unique characteristics.

The question a subject of a nation might pose the very moment they can assume a national belonging is the process/ procedures a nation can be identified as one. How could it successfully attain to name a group by nationalist or what are the determined norms or characteristics to call a selected/ refined group as nationalists? The norms would be agreeable by groups that would decide on a set of values by which they define their group. Language, family, linkage, religion and territories of a state can all be meant to be seen as properties of a nationalist group. However, a group might not altogether fall into the same parts of what defines them as a nation which paves the way to a hegemonic imposition of norms that might not be compatible with what a group would be identified by. The identification is a procedural act which limits the scope of deciding what an entity should be categorised as and the characteristics that a certain group can be seen as. Questions about the factual or mythical conceptualisations of a nation remain the dominant controversy in developing the national identity of a group, the process of identification revolves as well around the possibility of it being constructive if not ideologically constructive, the national identity spins around the ethical basics and contributions so as to figure out what makes up a nation and the national identity.

The first part of the following paper addresses the problematic of the presence of the nation in analogy to the state. It sets border lines between the nationalist perspectives of the nation and the social construction from which poles; realistic and mythical. The paper discusses the ideological manifestations of the authoritative voices in certifying the national identities through the imposed doctrines; terrestrial, mythical, historical, as well as religious. It also compares the social construction of the national identities and the affirmation of the societies in determining the constituents of a nation through ideological agendas emphasising the probabilities of the process of inclusion or exclusion of certain groups from the global identification of regarded communities. The article concludes with raising a debate about the role of ethnicities and the decisive indications that guarantee their functionality in nation-building participation.

1. The formulation of the nation and state: The dichotomy between myth and fact.

What makes a nation and what could the elements of a nationhood be like? There should be a clear understanding that nation/ nationhood is not synonymous with nationalism and nationalists. A nation is basically decided upon by multiple layers of characteristics that make it an identified isolated being in terms of its territory, population, independence and government. First of

all, a nation has to decide on its borders and its neighbouring nations by territorial boundaries. Its people identify themselves with the land that is framed and know where it starts and when the limit of it exists. The inhabitants recognise their partners and comrades based on the cohesiveness that is represented in language. Providing that the nation belongers tend to communicate in an understandable and comprehensive means of communication which makes of them a unity, national subjects are invited/ forced to communicatively adhere to a canonised version of expression so that the message can be smoothly and effectively defused and successfully retained. Additionally, a nation is paramountly seen as independent and has total sovereignty over its territory. No nation is politically and internationally accepted unless it has power over all parts of its territory. Along with assuring the aforementioned characteristics of a nation, the nation promoters take into consideration the importance of organisation by which they tend to fruitfully play a role in the prosperity of the territory they occupy and the people they rule. Governmental success is what paves the way to a nation's recognition as well as its continuity. Hence, the nation, technically, abides by the listed categorising catalogue to have access to being recognised and named a nation among others. Undoubtedly, the proposed and advocated list of sampling a nation necessitates full success in the creation of the nation. However, it would be farfetched if it is assumed that the exact listed categories can be identically part of every nation's process of naming and identification. Spencer and Wollman quoted Stalin's definition of a nation stating that the primordial vision towards the creation of a nation is "a historically evolved, stable, community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture".¹ Stalin provides a Functionalist definition of the term nationalism. He decides that a nation can be constituted only if there is a nation; people who share the same things. A definite community of people; not racial, nor tribal, it should be a historically constituted community. This nation should be a stable community that has a history. A nation must have a common language; by and large that this is the official language ruled by the authorities. Common territory is another constituent of making and deciding on a nation. So, a stable community is historically constituted with a common language and common territory. They also must have a cohesive economic background which reflects the communist perspective of Stalin towards the creation of a nation. Nation; is a historically constituted stable community with a common language, a common territory that they share and an economic system upon which they agree and they have a sort of a cohesive psychological make-up which then constitutes a common culture. After all of these things and when all these characteristics come together; then, we can call it a nation.

From a primordialist perspective, the nation is constructed owing to its proponents and primordial roots. Based on ethnic and cultural nationalism, the primordial perspective finds its derivations by which the national identity is developed and naturally presumed. They refer back to the group's tradition and religion as basic elements in deciding on the specificities of a group. Also, they relate the national identities to the shared homeland and history that those incorporated within the same label as national subjects are patriotically related to them and cannot give up any of it in referring to what makes them part of the nation. The primordial theoreticians include biological and blood kinship as core aspects in developing the sense of belonging to a nation. Ancestry and family ties are considered worthy in designing their identities. These ties are kind of immutable and exclusive and none can come from outside and be part of it. Still, there is a possibility of being part of the overall tendency of creating the nation. The promordialists stress the invariable paramount of the language in making the nation. In other words, no nation could be viewed as an entity unless they are unified by one language through which messages as well as canals of communications are controlled and limited. To embrace a primordial national conception of a certain cluster different intertwined aspects are unavoidably introduced to the list of categorisations that dictate their efficacious presence in the success of such a national being.

Wouldn't the list be imposed on national subjects to adjust and regulate their nations based on the prior preparation of what makes them and their belonging to a nation? These varieties and elements can always be applied prudently allowing a sense of freedom in the differences each nation would bring forward in establishing the *What* they are and the *How* they can be identified.

On the other hand, constructivist theoreticians of national identities punctuate that nationalism is a conscious act of construction that is built up through prevailing processes to achieve the ultimate purpose of establishing a national body. The modernist theorist of nationalism Ernest Gellner approaches the concept emphasising the probability of the multiplicity of the group that is going to be fused into the same categorisation by any means so as to establish a homogeneous society that longs for the same objectives and does not cross one another's ultimate societal norms.

For every effective nationalism, there are n potential ones, groups defined either by shared culture inherited from the agrarian world or by some other link. {...} which could give hope of establishing a homogeneous industrial community.²

Thus, a nation cannot be viewed as a totally homogeneous group based on the same every single aspect that determines it. Rather, the diversity of its components and the possibility of their categories in working together towards the ultimate goal of naming a mosaic group as a nation without taking the differences as a barrier to its success.

Ernest Renan defines the nation as a concept which contains some vagueness in its dimensions. He views that the nations have a common history that necessitates having common points in the present time.

As for the nation, it is both historically determined and general. As a term, it refers both to the modern nation-state and to something more ancient and nebulous - the 'nation' - is a local community, domicile, family, condition of belonging. The distinction is often

¹ Philip Spencer, Howard Wollman, *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. (Sage Publications: London, 2002): 13.

² Ernest Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983): 45.

obscured by nationalists who seek to place their own country in an immemorial past where its arbitrariness cannot be questioned.³ As long as a nation struggles together and survives together, they are doomed to grow as a nation. It has a past that brings it to the present. Though it is not only a past of glories, it can also be a past of suffering. It is historically constructed. Each individual has in their souls the creation of the nation in their everyday tasks. Renan declares how much important it is to the elites to work out a past that combines all of the nations' constituents regardless of how arbitrary it might seem.

The national building as a concept is not an easy matter and cannot effortlessly be approached and defined. The construction of a nation faces an immense set of crises that stands between the creation of a nation and the fixation of its categorisations. If it is stated earlier that a nation is a group of people who share the same land and language as well as culture can be a core element in the backbone of a nation, however; the identity dichotomy raises the question of the extent to which a giving nation contains subjects who assume an undistinguishable identity vis-à-vis the other. To reinforce the creation of a nation, governments and national advocates work on guaranteeing the obedience of its citizens and internalising the feeling of righteousness among the people under its sovereignty. They work on cultivating and empowering the image of willing respect for the regime and the goals they long to attain. Moreover, to make sure that the nation has a total handover of the whole territory, they tend to penetrate into all aspects of life and reinforce the obedience of its citizens by imposing government's writs on all the population. Another aspect that the nation emphasises in order to expand its power over the population is the suggestion that all of the society's subjects participate in the making of the nation. The people are allowed to have a say in what can take place in their nation and how the governors proceed with the making of the nation and its prosperity. Last but not least, the distribution of wealth is another figure the advocates stress in making the nation. Who receives what and whom would be acknowledged owing to their vital role in the nation's creation cannot be but another method to deeply cheer for the construction of the national identity of a nation's constituents.

In the *Myth of the Nation*, Rumina Sethi underpins Gellner's perspective on the reliance of the nationalist on the agrarian conception of belonging in developing a national identity claiming:

I have argued that nationalism relies paradoxically on the 'little' traditions of the countryside for its definitions of authenticity and purity although it is a movement initiated in the cities. The sentiment of nationalism thus builds a sense of solidarity with the peasantry, who appear to have scarcely any role in social change or process of modernization. The rural ethnic groups, on the contrary, are often in conflict with the culturally 'foreign' elites who occupy important social positions.⁴

Though nationalist promoters launched their national identities based on the conception of the peasantry lifestyle using their elitist standards so that they can generate an identification with a national subject who has not contributed to such a process or who even objects to the ideological background the nationalists used to establish these 'imagined communities'. In *Nation and Nationalism*, Gellner has confined the prosperity of a national theory into two main aspects "will and culture"⁵ stating that both are essential in the contribution of the nation construction though none of the two can be effective when remote. Benedict Anderson addresses his vision towards the nation that is based on cultural stems whether it reinforces its precedent cultures or it opposes them. In *Imagined Communities*, he states that nationalism should be seen in accordance:

... not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which- as well as against which – it came into being.⁶

In the second chapter of *Imagined Communities*, Anderson classifies precise elements that make a full image of national identities. Firstly, he considers the religious community as part of the cultural roots. He develops the concept of how important religious script-language offers access to metaphysical truth which plays a conclusive role in formulating the truth not only about the ontological stances; rather, it can be used to make absolutist dimensional understandings about the national identities themselves. Besides, Anderson reminiscently calls up once the formula the nations looked like. A national subject, as he sees them, was ruled by monarchical and dynastical regimes whose sovereignty was absolute and above all divine. Thus, the sense of 'national' identity, to use the modern usage of the phenomenon, would look up their rulers and their nations as transcendently cosmological. Time is another debated discussion raised by Anderson to indicate the uncertainty in distinguishing time from its original and natural existence and that of history. He highlights how nations internally create a sense of absence of temporality of the notion of time in its historical sense. They develop the sense that nations have long lasted since ever.⁷

In so far as nationalist representations are accepted as real, they create their own reality. It is with this in mind, perhaps, that there arises among the intelligentsia the need to govern discourse: underlying the control of language lies the belief in the true content of words. The truth-content of such perceptions possesses the ability to be verified in a wide range of ways, encompassing their coherence and accessibility within their own cultural frameworks and bringing to light the acceptance of any representations of truth. The line distinguishing reality from representation is very delicate. It is very disquieting as well as politically restricted more around the indefinite issues addressed both from an essentialist and anti-essentialist point of view. The subject matter is to carry off between the complexities originating from both. It is evident that scepticism has indisputably made redundant the position of the

³ Ernest Renan, 'What is a Nation?', in Homi Bhabha. *Nation and Narration*. (New York: Routledge, 1990): 45.

⁴ Rumina Sethi, *Myths of the Nation*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999): 179.

⁵ Ernest Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism*: 51

⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. Revisited version*. (London, Verso: 2006):12.

⁷ Anderson: 9-36.

historian since truth has become relative.

Relativism, a modern corollary to scepticism, is the belief that truth is relative to the position of the person making a statement. It has generated a pervasive lack of confidence in the ability to find the truth or even to establish that there is such a thing as the truth. Relativism leads directly to a questioning of the ideal of objectivity, because it undermines the belief that people can get outside of themselves in order to get at the truth. If truth depends on the observer's standpoint, how can there be any transcendent, universal, or absolute truth, or at least truths that hold for all groups for many generations? We are arguing here that truths about the past are possible, even if they are not absolute, and hence are worth struggling for.⁸

While relativism has gone beyond the error-free truth claims, it must be approved that some expanse of belief has to be extended to our value judgments so as to make them convincing if not absolute. As it has been defined by Tope Omoniyi, "essentialism is the philosophy behind labelling any number of normative characteristics or practices as constituting the core of an individual or group which are then used to define them and held to be true of all members of the group"⁹. Essentialism, then, is the belief that certain characteristics reside at the core of a certain individual or group of people, a core unchangeable and vital for the self-definition of the aforementioned entities. Diana Fuss also defines essentialism as "a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the "whatness" of a given entity"¹⁰. Defining the "whatness" of a given entity" entails by necessity the exclusion of all 'other' entities that do not conform to or correspond with those properties. It is an exclusion of difference. If one was to concentrate on the idea of a possibility of truths about the past, this notion would at least make truth a probable result that would argue to prove. The individual's objectivity in claiming the truth must be revisited and judgmentally retained. Absolutism in the claimant perspective cannot be fully taken as an ultimate truth free from any inconveniences; that is to say, as long as their choices of variants tend to be idiosyncratically and group-based selected, the agreed-uttered truth needs a reviewing that might either strengthen the claim or put it on hold till it is proven opposite.

The discourses through which nationalisms have been constructed due tend to be addressed to its patriots to establish their view about a nation and belonging. The elites play the role of reincarnating the national perspectives as well as identities giving the ideologies that govern their discourses. Based on the ethno-symbolist perspective, Smith represents the origin and nature of nation and nationalism as follows:

... what gives Nationalism its power are the myths, memories, traditions and symbols of ethnic heritage, and the ways in which a proper living past has been and can be rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsias. (1999, 9)¹¹

The elites tend to strengthen their position, reinforce it and internalise the identities by glorifying and tightening the bond with a 're'-presented heritage. These listed categories and symbols play a critical role in preparing for the construction of these identities. Ernest Gellner denies such a belittled image stating that:

Nations are natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent ... political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates existing cultures; that is reality.¹²

The construction of nations takes into its ordeal consideration those cultures that might create a barrier to their existence. These parts that once used to be a parcel of a pre-existing nation and a deeply rooted culture in a society turn to be a threatening choice to the establishment of newly "invented" nations. The pivotal role of the intelligentsia cannot be overlooked or disparaged since they work intensively and more exquisitely to choose the compatible axioms that have to reflect and empower the goals required by the construction of the nation itself. Benedict Anderson draws the ultimate society's features through which a nation could exist in harmonious and perfect conditions. He assumes that such irreciprocal type of societies that are based on day-to-day interactions and a feeling of belonging as well as participation in the forming and continuity of the nation is but a community that allows and embraces all sorts of exclusions as well as inclusions¹³. This community goes under strict and tight procedures and filtering processes in order that they can end up with a solid and fixed identity of the nation they belong to baring into its consciousness that what differs or opposes the categorisation of the nation is threatened to total dismissal from the overall wholeness.

However, Gellner insists that nations are not based mainly and foremost on such myths. Still, nations and nationalists rely, if not totally, on the pre-nationalist bounds to strengthen these doctrines.

But nationalism is not the awakening and assertion of these mythical, supposedly natural and given units. It is, on the contrary the crystallization of new units, suitable for the conditions now prevailing, though admittedly using as their new material the cultural,

⁸ Joyce Appleby, et al. *Telling the Truth about History*. (New York and London: W. W. Norton. 1994): 7.

⁹ Tope Omoniyi, "Hierarchy of identities": *The Sociolinguistics of Identity*. Tope Omoniyi and Goodith White (eds). (London: Continuum, 2006), [11-33]: 16.

¹⁰ Diana Fuss. *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference*. (New York: Routledge, 1989): xi.

¹¹ Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 9.

¹² Gellner. (1983): 49.

¹³ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition. (London: Verso, 2006): 47-65.

historical and other inheritances from the pre-nationalist world. (49)¹⁴

Thus, the modern view towards a nation does not deny the fact that revolves around the mythologising of the nation. The existing nations, territories, states, as well as belongings, find their roots not in what it makes of it in the time being, but rather, all “glories”, “histories”, “tales” and “National pride” that are internalised and imbeddedly transmitted into the individual’s state of consciousness. Nations are to be viewed, thus, as “slippery and elusive object”¹⁵. They are not existentially and tangibly “real”, but they are “imagined”. Anderson states that:

What I am proposing is that neither economic interest, liberalism, nor Enlightenment could, or did, create in themselves the kind or shape of imagined community to be defended from these regime’s depredations.¹⁶

He elaborates on his vision that the ‘imagined communities’ or national consciousness is originated with the spread of the print language. With the invention of the printing industry and the possibility of remote people in different nations having access to knowledge through vernacular languages, national emergence and consciousness started developing in national subjects. According to Anderson, print languages pave the way to national consciousness on different parts including; they opened up rooms for unified exchange and communication through print, these printed languages have helped in developing a sense of fixed meanings that is going to play a staple role in the creation an antique image to the language used, it also allows a specific language to perform more powerfully suppressing older and ineffective ones. Anderson stresses, then, the importance of these vernacular languages in bringing about new identities in the society providing that this society is made out of a reading public which has interacted with the printed languages from different levels and through a variety of scopes. Literature, accordingly, has a pivotal role in creating the consciousness of national identity. Imaginative productions in literature have a hand in shaping the national understanding of a reading society. The novel genre has the biggest part in being a medium of expression using the vernacular languages to make sure in developing these imagined communities; a community that one can feel for a figure within the same realm of existence only just because they share the same features of belonging to the same nation¹⁷.

Gellner has transcended the importance and necessity of the linkage of an individual to a nation to being a human. As all humans possess a culture – providing culture is defined as a way of life of an individual -, thus; that individual can only be communicated and associated with through a connection to a culture. In other words, an association with a nation that they cannot be contacted with unless they belong necessarily to one. In Gellner’s case, the culture produced by a centralised education provides people with their ticket to participate in the economic and social life of the national society in which they reside.

If a man is not firmly set in a social niche, whose relationship as it were endows him with his identity, he is obliged to carry his identity with him in his whole style of conduct and expression; in other words, his “culture” becomes his identity. And the classification of men by ‘culture’ is of course the classification of “nationality”. It is for this reason it now seems inherent, in the very nature of things, that to be human means to have a nationality.¹⁸

In naturalising the state of being associated to a nation and the only possibility in viewing an individual which can never be conceived else way, Kohn and Kedourie, for example, both define nationalism by suggesting it has a totalitarian edge. Kohn states that:

“Nationalism is a state of mind, permeating the large majority of a people and claiming to permeate all its members; it recognizes the nation-state as the ideal form of political organization and the nationality as the source of all creative cultural energy and of economic well-being. The supreme loyalty of man is therefore due to his nationality, as his own life is supposedly rooted in and made possible by its welfare”¹⁹

2. Construction of the national identity: the nation’s social and ideological superstructure.

Since Nations are built on the basis of a shared and common belief towards a land, history, culture and loyalty, the individuals, meanwhile, would be able to approach the notion identically and agreeably. However, an individual within a given nation does not perceive/ view themselves as a part of the same nation they would be identified with. Appiah pointed out in debating the issue of history and the inevitability of one’s group precise historical background and how an individual is assumably part of a society just because they share the ‘same’ history. He affirms that:

Whether a common history is something that could be a criterion that distinguishes one group of human beings - extended in time – from another ... the answer is no ... sharing a common group history cannot be a criterion for being members of the same group, for we would have to be able to identify the group in order to identify its history ... History may have made us what we are; but the choice of a slice of the past in a period before your birth as your own history is always exactly that: a choice.²⁰

Historical reliance to build up a notion of belonging according to Appiah needs a personal act from the subjects themselves so as to decide whether that part of history which is seen and presumed that it is part and parcel of theirs; regardless of them being ineffective

¹⁴ Gellner. (1983): 49.

¹⁵ Philip Spencer, and Howard Wollman. *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. (London: Sage Publications, 2002): 2.

¹⁶ Anderson: 65.

¹⁷ Anderson: 37-46

¹⁸ Earnest Gellner, *Thought and Change*. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964): 157.

¹⁹ Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*. (London: Routledge, 2017): 21.

²⁰ Anthony Appiah, *In My Father’s House*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992): 50-1.

or have had no additional value in the making of it is to be adapted as part of one's characterisation, or they might opt for discarding it renaming their backgrounds differently from the group they would priorly be a member of. Though Appiah named such action as being a choice by the individuals, it might not seem as a free act or reaction the latter would perform in deciding the exact elements of their identities. The question that might be raised is to what extent that individual is conscious of their being and what defines them as group belongers. Nevertheless, E. Renan visualises nations similar to individuals in the way of creation and construction. He believes that both of them rely heavily on the past and devotion to the cult legitimising the ancestor's priority in determining and defining what makes the "us" and the "we are"²¹. This romanticised allegiance to the past, common struggles and strong bond paves the way to the inclined agreement to stay together and be governed by natural consents in the future. He added that consolidate past and perpetual unity are governed by consent which will result in prosperity and hegemony within a nation.

The very act of definition sets one to probe the elements with which the observed object is limited to or to what extent different dimensions are given or used to determine it. Defining does not take place unverbally; a series of inclusions and exclusions would be brought forward so as to claim and limit a concept to a set of categories, decisiveness, and impositions. The variables that would lead to an observer's outcomes are themselves and what constitutes his/hers. An objective definition of a self, other, group, or community needs a thorough look and scrutinised attention to how a definition would be constructed. Theorists' background and ideological perspectives are the main determinants. What constitutes their stances cannot be disassociated from what is basically the pillar of the visions and representations of their original theoretical reliance. The definition of a term or in other words the meaning of a word is a challenging task since we start from the initial point that a word can be defined using other terms and expressions to approximate the essence of a concept. When reading a definition, the centralised purpose is to find essential attributes to the thing defined, precision; avoiding too broad or too limited coverage of the term, clarity, as well as linear. It is agreeable amongst theoreticians as well as researchers that the provided definitions are based on the perspective of the dictionary or promoters of the given definition. Thus, definitions multiply as much as there are of perspectives that discussed and scrutinised the term at hand. The meaning, then, is not one and unique, it is related to a certain category of discourse. Definitions serve a variety of functions which makes its general character varies with the function it plays. The different definitions can probably be included under the Aristotelian conceptualisation of definitions that give the essence of a thing. However, giving essence of a concept is not the only activity one undergoes while providing a definition. Definitions cannot be artificial; rather, they must be theoretical and explanatory. Linguistically based, meaning is what language makes evident about the world we live in or any conceivable or make-believe world. Any utterance in language, be it a sound or a text, is meant for expressing an inner idea sounded or verbalised. These utterances are perceived differently and defined accordingly as it has to be read and decoded multiply based on its perceivers. A word, phrase, sentence, utterance, graffiti, and text, when produced, are conceived either denotatively or connotatively depending on the meaning which a reader is able to decode of the encoded variable. The meaning of a certain word can be a discursive practice that does not only indicate the talk; rather, it indicates the embedded meaning that is applied by the dominant discourse referring to the institutionalised conceptualisation of the meaning. The meaning; therefore, is a production, circulation, and interpretation that surround a text which needs close analysis the moment of deciphering meaning out of them. Should/ would there be a real meaning of an utterance or should/ would a reader long for such fallacious interpretation of utterances? Rumina Sethi discusses the individual's interrelated dependency on the national identity claiming:

The awakening of national sentiment engenders the illusion of an identity of masses, engineered by appealing to a common ancestry in order to build the impression of motherland. The past, then, becomes a convenient tool for a like future, and its attendant gods bind the members of the nation into a mass of devotees. (20)²²

Thus, the national identity is to be perceived as a forced/ reinforced notion by the elites that goes hand in hand with the political ideologies and agendas. The nationalist representation of the identity of a nation, that is viewed wordily as unique and exceptional to a group of people identified by the same exact characteristics that are priorly determined, such representation, is to be viewed as a falsified consciousness. In other words, the formation of this identity that associates an individual to a nation may not/ does not have an objective reference (referential) which can reflect the "being" of a nation.

The nation for Renan is a corporation of people who share a common past and have derived a strong bond with an agreement to stay together and be governed by mutual consent in the future. Renan defines a nation:

The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice and devotion of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. (36)²³

Renan has developed his view by associating the importance in being in a harmonious nation, the people of the same nation have to have common glories in the past and have a common will in the present. They should have performed great deeds together so as to play much more effectively in performing more and more in the future. Thus, a strengthening past and common future goals for a people is the essential backbone of the unity of the nation that is governed by consent. Day and Thompson support Renan's view stating that populations:

don't just develop an awareness of these ideas as individuals. Rather, people need to be encouraged to think of themselves as a

²¹ Renan, in Homi Bhabha: 36.

²² Sethi.

²³ Renan.

nation, with all the cultural and political implications this concept entails. It is nationalism, as a distinctive form of politics and as a way of thinking about our identity, relations to others and to government, which performs this function.²⁴

Day and Thompson can also share the same attitude towards the identity of national construction through association and reference to an overall body of characteristics. Based on a Marxist view towards the nation building, they assert that:

Many were critical of its 'aggressive' elements, yet shared with Durkheim and Weber a view that the nation was a sociological reality, and that, with some qualifications, groups of people could be referred to as sharing a national character. (4)²⁵

Therefore, if an individual cannot be approached in person, and the only way, they can be classified, is always through a list of characteristics that once has been established so that a given nation would be defined, Ernest Gellner supports this perspective by declaring that "*Nations maketh man*, nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities."²⁶

Sethi proved the aforementioned standing point borrowing the Althusserian view on how the masses are viewed by the elites using hegemonic images so that they can define and represent the national identity. The ideological application of the intelligentsias upon the passive and unthinking subjects forces a set of national definitions which are not clearly grasped by the represented themselves. Thus, the nationalist conceptualisation puts the consciousness of the masses under questionable lenses to have access to the national consciousness of the subaltern vis-à-vis their own identities.²⁷ Providing specific norms and categorisations by the elite forced on the controlled and the subaltern, who themselves show less resistance if none towards the act of defining, is one of the methods in providing a nationalist conceptualisation. The elites not only shape and produce an identity of a nation that suits the ideology of the institution they belong to, but they also manipulate the subjects who belong to the same umbrella term of a nation. The individual does not negotiate and participate in creating an identity of their own which would be agreeable. Rather, the identity they will adopt would be forced on them from a higher culture. Culture is a shared social meaning through which people make sense of the world around them. Still, meaning is not floating out there. They are originated and created out of signs that (re)present the cultural items a subject encounters in a world they all move through. Culture goes beyond the daily inherited lived things to transcend their value and meaning from down-to-earth representations. In cultural studies, the concept of culture refers to a mobile signifier that entails suggestive meanings depending on the process of human activities. That means that culture does not embody an objective representation or entity independently from the scope it is related to. Moreover, the representation of the culture through language can bring forward alternative meanings to the world of culture as the representation would suggest newly introduced dimensions of the meanings to the specific cultural entities. Having to say this, how does *High culture* differ in comparison to Culture itself? If culture is a tool that people within a society consume based on the class they belong to, not all of the cultural aspects would be related to all society's subjects. Some of this culture would be associated with different classes and different levels of acceptance within a class other than others. Thus, high culture would be seen as a sophisticated culture generated and addressed to a specific category of society. How much effort is exerted by the culture generators so as to build a culture that would be a tool in classifying the society's parts and deciding on the exact elements to be part of which category of the culture? Additionally, to what extent would this high culture allow novel introductions to it and under what criteria would an element be part of the high culture? Thus, Culture is manipulated by its creators; firstly, to classify the society's entities, secondly, to decide on the categorization that suits the agenda of the god-fathers of the culture itself. As Gellner puts it:

men do not become nationalist from sentiment and sentimentality... They become nationalists through genuine objective, practical necessity, however obscurely recognised.²⁸

The dominant perspective on the creation of the national identity tends to be based on the overhand culture that designs the culture a certain people would adopt and abide by. The culture, that the promoters would invent as the essence recognised reflection of the characteristics of a national identity, is -the culture- that pours into the chosen listed categorisations they have undisputedly decided on. Thus, nationalists give much importance to filtering the belongers according to the embodiment of the national aspects of their day-to-day practices. Ernest Gellner defines such process by asserting that nationalism is about access to, contribution to, and identification with, a literate high culture political which is co-encompassing with a complete political component and its overall residents, and which has to be this way if it is to be companionable with the kind of partition of labour, the sort or method of production, on which this society is based.²⁹

Culture plays a significant role in deciding who can fit into its shades from those who should be excluded as they do not match the specifications of the culture. Cultures in their core representations not only are procreative as they might allow new elements to be introduced into it, which widens the scope of its expansion, but they can also stand against any novelties so that they can hold and retain their decisive features. This process is manipulated by the elites who can decide on what to be introduced into and what to be discarded from the newly defined culture. Edward Said views culture as a debatable concept which suggests multiplicities as well as restrictedness.

Cultures may then be represented as zones of control or of abandonment, of recollection and forgetting, of force or of dependence,

²⁴ Graham, D. and Thompson, A, *Theorizing Nationalism*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004): 82.

²⁵ Ibid: 4.

²⁶ Earnest Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism*: 7.

²⁷ Sethi: [19-21].

²⁸ Gellner, *Thought and Change*: 160.

²⁹ Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism*: 95.

of exclusiveness or of sharing, all taking place in the global history that is an element, Exile, immigration, and the crossing of boundaries are experiences that can therefore provide us with new narrative forms or, in John Berger's phrase, with *other* ways of telling.³⁰

The presence of a new culture proposes not only a multiplicity of the culture that might take under its umbrella conceptualisation, but it could also present a sense of erosion to whatsoever new that can be brought forward by the displaced subject. Ernest Gellner comments on the processing enouncing that:

The phrase 'access to culture' consequently means access to culture (anthropologically) which is denied to a person in virtue of his membership of another culture, and not in virtue of lack of education. This perhaps pedantic classification was essential if misunderstanding of the argument was to be avoided.³¹

To illustrate more on the above discussion, the question that might be posed is who and what determines the characteristics of a nation. A custom, song, behaviour as well as cultural determinants are advocated by the elites. The latter allows and rejects aspects of the whole image based on institutionalised inclusions and exclusions. There might be an element that is rejected at a given time by the promoters who, themselves, will allow it the moment it serves their attitudes and agendas. Cultural, national, and identity variables are managed and created owing to the servitude and goodness the elements could do to the nation as invented and categorised by the elites.

Ernest Gellner states firmly in his prominent and referential book *Nation and Nationalism*:

Nationalism is not what it seems and above all it is not what it seems to itself. The culture it claims to defend and receive are often its own inventions or are modified out of all recognition.³²

Identity inventions and nationalist characteristics suggested and engendered to come up with a society that might seem homogeneous in its overall image and status. Nonetheless, the same "nation" if it is perceived closely and in-depth, there must be unidentical perseverance that would make the nation much more obstinate and foreign to its particles. The society components possess particular virtues and characteristics that are, not necessarily, various and opposite to those that differentiate their counterparts within the same society. The essentialist determination towards a nation's enclosed portrayal cannot be taken for granted or might be unjust to view a mosaic group of people through a unique and narrow angle. M. Ed and Levin approximate how a national identity is constructed based on ethnicities. In other words, these identities can be formed through the dominance of the majority in an imposed ethnic group.

To define a people requires a recognition of distinctiveness that attaches uniquely to a group. Ethnic identity is the most widely used basis for legitimacy not only for minorities but also for majority groups sharing a common culture. An ethnic group that is a majority may attempt to imprint its culture on the state. (4)³³

From an ethical perspective, nations can be established and perfectly perceived when different groups of the nation are self-aware of what makes them in comparison to others. The ethnic perspectives view that nations are miscellaneous cultural recognitions that coexist and which conditionally prosper only if the groups are self-conscious of what makes them a group uniquely and distinctively detached from other minorities or constituents of the nation. Ethnicity is constructed more on belief and culture rather than biology. Stanley Tambiah summarises this traditional view stating that the collective identity is a perfect manifestation of the ethnic identity. It represents and voices the basic traits of a constructed national subject. Such depiction strengthens the innate tenure and mythic-historic legacy of belonging. The origins of the allegiance are traced back to the linkage to all that makes a nation starting from kinship to the gained advantages of the possession of the national identity. Historically, the ethnic collectivities share a solid bond and are self-generating and undergoing through time.³⁴

3. Constructing the national identity in view of ethnic diversity.

Race and ethnicity might be one of the criteria to draw a line between the within and without of national identity. Such distinction is based mainly on the intolerance and inequalities of its promoters. Brass sees both nationalism and ethnicity as "modern phenomena inseparably connected with the activities of the modern centralising state" (1991, 8)³⁵ He contends that:

"Ethnicity and nationalism are not 'givens' but are social and political constructions. They are creations of elites, who draw upon, distort, and sometimes fabricate materials from the cultures of groups they wish to represent in order to protect their wellbeing or existence or to gain political and economic advantage for the groups as well as themselves. (8)³⁶

What once has been detached from gaining ground to be politically correct to call a nation based on its minor presence and

³⁰ Edward Said, "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors", *Critical Inquiry*, 15: 2 (1989), [205-225]: 225.

³¹ Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism*. 93.

³² *Ibid*: 56.

³³ Michel Levin, *Ethnicity and Aboriginality Case Studies in Ethnonationalism*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993): 4.

³⁴ Stanley Tambiah, 'The Politics of Ethnicity', in Borofsky, Robert. (ed.), *Assessing Cultural Anthropology* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994): 430.

³⁵ Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Theory and Comparison* (New Delhi: Sage).

³⁶ *Ibid*.

representation has been differently approached as they have access internationally to the world's recognition and acceptance. Following the recently accepted nations which managed to obtain their right of existence and independent self-determination.

The view of ethnic groups as minorities, which often carried the sense of numerical and moral inferiority, has been replaced with confident assertions about self-determination. Claims which were once voiced as pleas for understanding and compassion are now made on the basis of universal human rights with strong claims to public recognition. The universality of the right to self-determination is not doubted and appears to support ethnic self-consciousness. Moreover, ethnicity is not a characteristic of minorities, but an attribute of any group sharing common cultural characteristics.³⁷

Hence, the possibilities of forming a nation based on a unique and imposed ethnic group, regardless of how minor they might be perceived within a nation that once they have been part of, multiple and could gain recognition access if only they prove that what makes of them a nation does not go opposite of what makes one. To reflect an ethnic community there should be some conditions that have to be included in the group to name it as such. In *National Identity*, Smith lists these elements suggesting that for a group to successfully be labelled an ethnic group it has to have a proper name whose historical memories and ancestries are shared and glorified. Along with having slight differences between its subjects in terms of the common culture they possess and share, the people of this community should be deeply related to a homeland as their mother-land, which they can defend with whatsoever it takes to preserve its sovereignty that would lead it to survival and prosperity. Solidarity is an undebatable pillar of the ethnic community. These aforementioned signs are the core constructive basics that ethnic communities can be approached as if they possess these features as suggested by Smith.³⁸ These definitions of the ethnic group converge with the definition Smith himself provides to the nation. He states that the creation of the nation revolves around a common history of the ancestors, clearly divided and bordered territories, and a shared homeland that is innately believed that the nation of a group has emerged from. He enlarges his definition of the nation stating that it is generated out of common myths and historical memories that empower the heavy burden a national subject would feel towards preserving such patrimonies. Additionally, Smith defines the nation similarly to the ethnic group highlighting the importance of a mass culture of people of the same community. The shared culture negates and pushes away any intrusions and disturbing aspects that might shake the unity of the community and its stillness.³⁹

Political recognition and acceptance which lead to the forming of a nation does not only stop at the level of self-consciousness, historically speaking. Different other dimensions are required so as to make a group a State/ Nation. In an article written by Walter Connor under the title of "The Politics of Ethno-nationalism", he lists the principles of National self-determination stating:

It is only in an era in which the ideal of popular sovereignty is widely accepted that any group that views itself as a people is apt to view a right to create its own state as self-evident and incontestable. (5)⁴⁰

Therefore, any community regardless of its size, that possesses the foundational structures of a nation can claim its existence as has conventionally been granted by the international laws and governments. The self-realisation and recognition pave the way to the construction of nations out of the made-through minorities that long for the right of self-determination. Minorities, that once have been perceived as negligible or morally inferior, are graced with power to fight for their universal political right of existence and recognition. An ethnic group is not to be seen as a minority, rather, it possesses characteristics and attributes that would make of it a nation as such only if there is a will to look forward to being a nation by itself.⁴¹

In *Theorising Nationalism*, Graham Day and Andrew Thompson comment on the action of forming a nation enunciating that:

Time and Space are reorganised into 'national' shape, to form the matrix within which people exist. The past is reinterpreted as a 'national' tradition and set of national memories, which may involve removing all traces of other possible 'national' parts. (38)⁴²

In light of such tendencies in viewing the nation, the construction/ interpretation/ formation of a nation would be recognised and established by a set of inclusions and exclusions. The very act of choosing specific memories and dates as being nationally internalised and circulated leads to highlighting a limited group of references that have been chosen by the history/ decision makers so as to frame the notion of a nation. The same theory that says that while an entire nation may think it recognises the procedures of participation, it additionally must be cautious regarding the process of exclusion could be perpetuated. The moment we provide a refined list of what makes a nation, one cannot overlook the possibility, if not the essentialist view, that the provided categorisation has negated other aspects that can make the same overall frame another vision of a nation. In other words, prioritising the core aspects of a nation is done based on an ideological purpose that strengthens the political nation accordingly with the decision makers' view/ limit of a nation. Gellner agrees heavily with such a perspective affirming:

It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round. Admittedly, nationalism uses the pre-existing, historically inherited proliferation of cultures or cultural wealth though it uses them very selectively and it most often transforms them radically.

³⁷ Michael Levin, "Ethnicity and aboriginality: conclusions". In Michel Levin, *Ethnicity and Aboriginality Case Studies in Ethnonationalism*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993): 169.

³⁸ Anthony Smith, *National Identity*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991): [19-42].

³⁹ Smith, *National Identity*: 14.

⁴⁰ Walker Connor, "The Politics of Ethnonationalism". *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1973: pp [1-21]: 5.

⁴¹ Levin: 169.

⁴² Graham, D. and Thompson, A. *Theorising Nationalism*: 38.

(1983, 55)⁴³

However, assuring the unity of a group and classifying it as a nation is not an arbitrary act through which a nation can be constructed peacefully and without any traumas. In *What's a Nation*, Renan declares that "unity is always effected by means of brutality"⁴⁴. Locating, naming, categorising, identifying, and limiting are all methods of elimination as well as qualification. Yet, we cannot recognise and locate an element until we name it. Though naming hegemonically narrows and shrinks a being to a set of naturalised and determined aspects, by which we can approach a subject and identify it. Naming remains the only way that a very specific item or concept might be familiarised with or locate it. It is the line dividing the unknown to the truth which is gained by naming. It can either categorise a certain element into being essential or may classify elements as undermining.

Therefore, the moment a nation is named and a group of people are localised, in other words, are defined, the definitions and limitations that are given to the subjects should not be indecisively taken for granted and should be questioned in terms of the excluded categorisations that have not been given to the definition at hand. The categorisation is based on power and the ability to impose it upon people regardless of how much resistance it might face and defeat.

Conclusion:

Deciding on a unified meaning to the concept of nationalism and the national identity does not seem as manageable as it might look like to the everyday use of the terms. Definitions as has been debated priorly stress the importance of the background allegiances in deciding on a term's meaning and conceptualisation. It is not valid to jump to short-cut conclusions providing a single angled perspective and limiting the scope of the definition. Indeed, nationalism is a concept and reality that none in the modern world would be able to overlook neither in its importance nor in its effectiveness in shaping today's societies and international relationships. Leila Gandhi stresses the importance of nationalism existence as the only prevail and possible doctrines modern nations would be represented in providing that the social and intellectual development of humanity has prepared its subjects to adopt them.⁴⁵ The agrarian perspective of a society cannot have room in today's societies as they cannot support the heavily assigned tasks the modern Man is waiting for from those in charge of them and vice versa. Ernest Gellner comments on the inevitable association of nationalism with the creation of societies and mankind itself stating:

If we invoke the *sleeping-beauty nations*, neither possessing a state nor feeling the lack of it, against the nationalist doctrine, we tacitly accept its social metaphysic, which sees nations as the bricks of which mankind is made up. (48)⁴⁶

If it is initially and principally defined that a nation is a population with a historic sense of self and nationalism is a people's heightened sense of cultural, historical, and territorial identity, unity, and sometimes greatness, it can be, therefore, concluded that national identities emphasise these major elements differently depending on the perspective they view the nation from. National identities have been longing for a unique and distinguished entity through multiple views and cutting-edge definitions provided that each of which has a starting point from the ideology they represent or promote. Pramod Nayar offers a much more inclusive definition of the term nationalism alongside its inseparable background pillar, culture, stating:

"...the nation is also a cultural construct, built out of and upon the artistic, folkloric, theoretical, and philosophical discourses about the nation"⁴⁷

The conception of the national framework is not a subject that can be confronted or referred to with relative ease. Between the inception of a nation and the emergence of its classification, a vast array of crises must be surmounted. As previously noted, a nation is an assortment of people who reside within the same vicinity and converse in the same language. A nation's culture is additionally a vital component of its foundational elements. However, the identity distinction contributes to the question of how numerous individuals in the nation at large adopt an identity that is indistinguishable from one another. Governments and national advocates seek ways to guarantee citizens' commitment and to incorporate an awareness of accountability among the individuals who operate under the authority of their governments, with the objective of bolstering the foundations of a nation. They attempt to convey an image of determined approval of the power structure and the objectives they aspire to. Additionally, in order to demonstrate that the nation in question has complete power over all of its territory, they have a propensity to encroach on all facets of life and enhance citizen compliance by implementing government writs on the whole populace. The conviction that every component of society contributes to the formation of the nation is an additional trait that the nation demonstrates in order to further strengthen its authority over the majority of the population.

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⁴³ Gellner, Ernest. *Nation and Nationalism*.

⁴⁴ Ernest Renan. "What's a Nation?"

⁴⁵ Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998): 104.

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