Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: a critical assessment

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ABSTRACT. This paper offers a critical assessment of Anthony D. Smith's classical definition of the nation. In so doing, it argues that Smith fails to establish a clear-cut distinction between the concept of nation and state, since he attributes to the nation some of the features of the state, for instance the sharing of legal rights and duties among all its members. In addition, Smith's definition neglects the existence of nations without states. The paper offers a detailed examination of Smith's definition of the nation and the possible reasons why he has decided to introduce some fundamental changes into it in his most recent work. The paper then moves on to consider Smith's definition of national identity and to offer an alternative to it by including a reflection of how national identity is constructed in the global era.

Introduction

It is a great pleasure to contribute to this volume devoted to the work of Anthony D. Smith. In this paper I engage with his path-breaking contribution to the study of nations and nationalism. In so doing, I wish to highlight the importance of his theory and examine what I consider some of its most significant limitations.

The paper is divided into two parts. The first provides a critique of his concepts of nation and national identity. It begins by offering a brief introduction to ethnosymbolism and, after a critical discussion of Smith's classical definition of the nation, it highlights the relevance of his latest changes to this concept. The paper then moves on to consider his definition of national identity. It argues that by including 'citizenship' as one of its defining features, Smith associates national identity with membership of the state ignoring that, although all nations have a national identity, not all of them have a state of their own.

In the second part, I offer an alternative definition of national identity, which draws on some aspects of Smith's work on the relevance of history, territory and culture. I also examine the political dimension of national identity, absent from Smith's theory.

Part One
Ethnosymbolism

The ethnosymbolist theory developed by Smith has offered fresh and illuminating insights into pre-modern forms of collective cultural identity

such as those embodied in *ethnies*. Its contribution is located between stark modernist theories defending the recent, invented and constructed nature of nations and nationalism (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Anderson 1983), and perennialist theories emphasizing the permanence of nations (van den Berghe 1978; Geertz 1973; Armstrong 1982).

The study of *ethnies*, 'named human populations with shared ancestry myths, histories and cultures, having an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity' (Smith 1986: 32), is fundamental to the ethnosymbolist theory formulated by Smith. Its relevance stems from the *ethnie's* status as the precursor of nations. Smith explores the origins of nations and national identity and finds them in ethnic identity as a pre-modern form of collective cultural identity. In his view, 'Collective cultural identity refers not to a uniformity of elements over generations but to a sense of continuity on the part of successive generations of a given cultural unit of population, to shared memories of earlier events and periods in the history of that unit and to notions entertained by each generation about the collective destiny of that unit and its culture' (Smith 1991: 25). Smith adds: 'there is a felt filiation, as well as a cultural affinity, with a remote past in which a community was formed, a community that despite all the changes it has undergone, is still in some sense recognized as the "same" community' (Smith 1991: 33).

Smith's work on the relevance of the ethnic origins of nations becomes central to his understanding of 'why and where particular nations are formed, and why nationalisms, though formally alike, possess such distinctive features and contents' (Smith 1998: 191). His research on the role of myths, memories, values, traditions and symbols, as powerful differentiators and reminders of the unique culture and fate of the ethnic community, is fundamental to his analysis of national identity.

Ethnosymbolism focuses on the cultural aspects of nations and nationalism. The political aspects are left practically untouched. But, is it possible to offer a full account of nations and nationalism while ignoring their tremendous political leverage in modern societies? Can culture be dissociated from politics when examining national identity? Is it possible to ignore the role of the state in the construction of national identity? What are the political consequences of being recognized as, or claiming to be, a 'nation' in the modern world? In this paper I argue that a fully-fledged theory of nationalism ought to examine the political as well as the cultural aspects of nations and national identity.

My objective here is not to undermine the ethnosymbolist's contribution. Instead, I wish to argue that the ethnosymbolist approach, due to its narrow focus on the cultural aspects of nations and nationalism and the scant attention it pays to the study of the nation-state, remains insufficient to offer an integral view of nations and nationalism in the twenty-first century. It is my concern that a systematic and thorough political analysis has to complement the richness and insights provided by the ethnosymbolist approach.

Having said this, it is crucial to be aware that while emphasizing its cultural nature, ethnosymbolism is not 'apolitical'; on the contrary its findings contain

powerful political implications. The myths, symbols, traditions, heroes and holy places studied by ethnosymbolism are key components of any nationalist doctrine and, by studying them and bringing them to the fore, I argue that ethnosymbolism provides powerful arguments to those who seek to reinforce the political legitimacy of their nations and the power of the states claiming to represent them. For instance, the findings of ethnosymbolism, in an intended or unintended manner, are likely to turn into formidable cultural assets to be employed as legitimizing elements for a nation demanding self-determination. Proving that the community has pre-modern roots and that its culture shows a certain degree of continuity is a key objective for the creators of the nationalist doctrine.

The Nation

In my view, the most fundamental flaw in Smith's theory, which contains significant repercussions for his approach to national identity, stems from his conflation of nation and state. Although he claims to distinguish between the two, I set out to prove that he fails to do so.

In his book *National Identity* (1991), Smith formulates his classical definition of the nation as 'a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members' (Smith 1991: 14). In contrast, in his article 'When is a Nation?' (2002) Smith emphasizes the 'ideal-type' nature of his definition of the nation and, in an almost unprecedented move, he introduces very substantial changes to it. He defines the nation as 'a named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs' (Smith 2002: 15).

Three major changes can be identified when comparing the two definitions. In the most recent one: (1) the 'mass' character of public culture has been eliminated; (2) reference to a 'common economy' has also been removed; and (3) 'common legal rights and duties for all members' have been replaced by 'common laws and customs'.

Why has Smith changed his classical definition of the nation?

(1) I understand that the elimination of references to the 'mass' character of public culture is somehow connected with Smith's ongoing debate with Walker Connor, who, in his seminal essay 'When is a nation?', stressed that nationalism is a mass – not an elite – phenomenon, an assertion raising fundamental questions about when the emergence of a nation should be located in time.

If Smith were to continue arguing that a nation requires a 'mass' public culture as he has done for over ten years, then, how could he maintain that 'it was possible to find examples of social formations in pre-modern periods, even

in antiquity, that for some decades or even centuries approximated to an inclusive definition of the concept of the ''nation''"? (Smith 1998: 190). This statement would be simply untenable because Smith is not merely arguing that there is an ethnic origin of nations to be found in pre-modern times, rather he affirms that some 'nations' did exist prior to the modern period. Furthermore, how should 'mass' be defined? As including the 'whole' people? The 'majority' of the population? And if so, what type of 'majority'? Simply a large section of the population? Over 51 per cent?

Smith is aware of the potency of Connor's argument since 'pre-modern' nations never enjoyed a 'mass, public culture'. In 'When is a Nation?' Connor argues: 'A key problem faced by scholars when dating the emergence of nations is that national consciousness is a mass, not an elite phenomenon, and the masses, until quite recently isolated in rural pockets and being semi or totally illiterate, were quite mute with regard to their sense of identity(ies) … and very often the elites' conception of the nation did not even extend to the masses' (Connor 1994a: 159). A similar point is made by Ernest Gellner who emphasizes the distance between the high culture of elites and the low culture of the masses: 'In the characteristic agro-literate polity, the ruling class forms a small minority of the population, rigidly separate from the great majority of direct agricultural producers, or peasants…Below the horizontally stratified minority at the top, there is another world, that of the laterally separated petty communities of the lay members of the society… Even if the population of a given area starts from the same linguistic base line – which very often is not the case – a kind of culture drift soon engenders dialectal and other differences' (Gellner 1983: 10).

Smith's elimination of references to the 'mass' character of public culture allows him to claim that a nation exists even if its particular culture is not shared by the mass of the population. A 'public culture' is fundamentally different in scope from a 'mass' culture and much easier to attain.

(2) References to a 'common economy' have also vanished from Smith's most recent definition of the nation. The difficulty and complexity in defining 'a common economy' should not be underestimated. Does he refer to a common economy limited to the territorial boundaries of the nation? Or, should it be understood as a common economy cutting across national boundaries, an economy over which the nation has little or no control? Besides, if the nation is, as Smith insists, 'a kind(s) of collective cultural identity' (Smith 2002: 15), why should it include a 'common economy' as a key feature?

(3) In my view, 'common legal rights and duties for all members' is not what one should expect from a cultural community, such as the nation. Rather, this is a function of the state, the political institution that regulates the lives of people within its territory. In modern societies, only the state has constitutions and written laws and embodies sufficient power to define citizenship rights and duties within its territory. By suggesting that the members of the nation ought to share 'common legal rights and duties', Smith was simply attributing to the nation one of the fundamental characteristics of the state.

In his latest definition, Smith has replaced 'common legal rights and duties' by 'common laws and custom', a much more vague and open requirement which avoids his previous *de facto* inclusion of citizenship as a feature of the nation. But, in spite of such a significant change, Smith does not explain the reasons behind his unprecedented move. In what follows, I examine some of the flaws of Smith's classical definition of the nation, *National Identity* (1991), which in my view account for its recent modification.

A critique of Smith's classical definition of the nation

If we were to take Smith's classical definition of the nation in a literal sense, then the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the German Federal Republic (GFR), which did not share 'common legal rights and duties for all members' and lacked a 'common economy', stopped forming a single German nation after 1945. Should we understand that they became a single nation again after German unification in 1992, when they began to share – or should we employ expressions such as 'recover' and 're-establish' – a common economy and legal rights? Or, had they always remained a 'single' nation? And…if so, for how long could they have maintained separate economies, a public mass culture and legal rights and duties while still being considered a single nation?

In a similar manner, should we assume that Cyprus, after the Turkish invasion of its northern part – and the creation of the Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1974 (only recognized by Turkey) –and the subsequent construction of a completely different political regime, economy and public culture from that of the primarily Greek-influenced southern part of the island, is formed by two nations? Or, is it still a single nation?

In *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986), Smith wrote: 'The Catalans are undoubtedly a nation today, just as they were an *ethnie* in the pre-modern world. Not only do they inhabit their historic territory (more or less), they are now able to teach in their own language and fund a mass, public, standardized education system in Catalan and in Catalonia' (Smith 1986: 166). Smith did not even mention that the Catalans had only just recovered (1979) their autonomous political institutions, the right to teach in Catalan and fund a mass, public education. Would he have referred to them as a nation between 1936 and 1975 when Franco's dictatorship proscribed the Catalan language and culture from the public sphere?

Furthermore, when it comes to Catalonia's sharing of 'a common economy', Smith describes it as being 'closely linked to the wider Spanish economy' (Smith 1986: 166) and this is certainly true. But, does having a common economy imply full power to control taxation, interest rates, the stock exchange, control over money reserves and the nation's central bank? If so, then Catalonia has a quasi-common economy which is completely dependent on Spanish decisions and which does not have Catalonia's specific progress as its main objective. Catalonia is only a part of Spain and, experience shows that the prosperity and well being of a part has often been sacrificed in favour of a

much wider sense of prosperity. Would such a situation arise within a hypothetical environment within which Catalonia either had its own state or was considered as an equal and free partner within an eventual Spanish federation? I doubt it.

In addition, Smith argues that Catalans have rights and duties as Catalans plus legal Spanish citizenship, and, in his view, this description fulfils the condition that all nation's members should enjoy 'common legal rights and duties' (Smith 1986: 166). The problem is that Smith does not specify whether such rights and duties have to be democratically agreed and established or whether, on the contrary, they could be imposed upon a population. The Catalans shared 'legal rights and duties' during the 40 years of Franco's dictatorship, but these were not only imposed upon them but involved the proscription of the Catalan language, culture and autonomous political institutions. Moreover, Smith not only seems to imply that Spain is a 'nation of nations', an expression which is at least questionable, but he also neglects to point out that the Catalans' rights and duties are conditional on their status as Spanish citizens.

The Spanish constitution (1978) stresses the existence of a single sovereign *demos* in Spanish democracy, constituted by all Spaniards, including the Catalans, which on ratifying the Constitution made the autonomy of Catalonia possible. This interpretation considers the Catalan people to be a 'sub-group' of the *demos* formed by all the citizens of Spain. We could infer, in accordance with the arguments defended in the Constitution and in the Catalan Statute of Autonomy (1979), that access to political power (*kratos*) by the Catalan people is determined by a *demos* of which the Catalan people form a part, and not by the specific free will of this Catalan people constituted as a 'sovereign *demos*'.

A further question, untouched by Smith, concerns the status of those Catalans living in the historical territory of Catalonia, which is now a part of France. Are they to be considered as a part of the Catalan nation? This is an open and highly controversial question with numerous parallel cases around the world. If French Catalans were to be considered as members of the Catalan nation, then it would become obvious that not all Catalans share the same rights and duties. At present there are cultural and political movements in French areas, which promote their Catalan heritage.

The Catalan case reinforces the inability of Smith's classical theory to establish a clear-cut distinction between the concepts of nation and state. It is my contention that such a distinction is crucial to understand why, for example, a nation lacking or having lost its political institutions may survive for relatively long periods of time or why an occupied nation, having its economy, legal rights and mass public culture in the hands of the invader, can still be called a nation. The distinction between nation and state is fundamental to account for the continuity of some nations after having lost their political institutions. But, it is also very important to understand the processes of nation-building promoted by the state which are closely connected to the rise of modern nationalism.

At this point I wish to consider whether Smith's new definition of the nation (2002) is capable of redressing the flaws I have identified in his classical definition. In my view, in spite of acknowledging that to exist a nation does not require a 'mass' public culture, 'common economy' and 'common legal rights and duties' for all its members, Smith's latest definition still contains some fundamental limitations. For instance:

1 Does a nation cease to exist whenever its culture is proscribed from the 'public' sphere and confined to the private one? How should the term 'public culture' be understood?
2 A far more complicated issue concerns the meaning of the expression 'common laws'. In my view, its meaning could be subject to differing interpretations depending on whether we apply it to modern or pre-modern societies. In the former, it refers to a set of rules enforceable by the courts regulating the relationship between the state and its subjects, and the conduct of subjects towards one another, a definition similar to that of citizenship, which once again ignores stateless nations, in particular those whose territory is included within more than one state. When applied to pre-modern societies, however, the source, the enforcers and the subjects of 'common laws' become much more complex and diversified. They may include religion as well as other types of written and unwritten laws as key regulators of social life.
3 I argue that Smith's definition continues to ignore the political significance of being recognized as a 'nation' in modern societies. For instance, he disregards the fact that the state seeks to base its legitimacy on the idea that it represents the nation.

The nation, a cultural community, and the state, a political institution, have been subject to constant transformations throughout time and they have taken up different forms in different parts of the world. In my view, the distinction between nations 'with' and 'without' states could contribute to resolving some of the key dilemmas arising from Smith's classical definition of the nation as well as locating two different arenas within which nationalism emerges and evolves in modern societies.

On nations without states

I argue that a clear-cut distinction needs to be drawn between three main concepts: 'nation', 'state' and 'nation-state'.

By 'state', taking Max Weber's definition, I refer to 'a human community that (successfully) claims *the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory' (Weber 1991: 78), although not all states have successfully accomplished this, and some of them have not even aspired to accomplish it.

By 'nation', I refer to a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself (Guibernau 1996:47–48).

The nation-state is a modern institution, defined by the formation of a kind of state which has the monopoly of what it claims to be the legitimate use of force within a demarcated territory and seeks to unite the people subject to its rule by means of cultural homogenization.

But there is yet another term that needs to be defined and distinguished from the ones I have just mentioned: the nation without a state. By 'nations without states' I refer to those territorial communities with their own identity and a desire for self-determination included within the boundaries of one or more states, with which, by and large, they do not identify. In nations without states, the feeling of identity is generally based on their own common culture and history (which often goes back to a time prior to the foundation of the nation-state or, to employ Smith's theory, to its ethnic roots), the attachment to a particular territory and an explicit desire for self-determination.

A nation without state is defined by the lack of its own state and by an impossibility to act as a political institution on the international scene. It is based on the existence of a community with a stable but dynamic core containing a set of factors, which have generated the emergence of a specific identity. It should be added, however, that nations are not unique, eternal or unalterable, and that throughout history there are many examples both of the disintegration of some nations that have played an important role during a certain period, and of the rise of new nations. There are also several examples of nations that have had their own state in the past and which, for various reasons, have become nations without states; Catalonia and Scotland are cases in point.

Self-determination, sometimes defined as political autonomy, does not always involve the independence of the nation, although it often includes the right to secession. Catalonia, Quebec, Scotland, the Basque Country and Flanders represent only a few nations without states currently demanding the right to self-determination, although with different nuances in each case. It could be argued that some of these nations do have some kind of state of their own and could be considered as 'quasi-states', since a substantial number of powers have been devolved, or are in the process of being devolved, to their regional parliaments. In all these cases, however, the powers transferred exclude foreign and economic policy, defence and constitutional matters. The 'quasi-state' that these communities enjoy is, as the term indicates, incomplete. This explains why it is still meaningful to refer to them as nations without states.

On Smith's theory of national identity

The ethnosymbolist approach lays special emphasis on the subjective components of national identity, while simultaneously underlining the

sociological bases of collective cultural identities, like *ethnies* and nations (Smith 2002: 15).

'National identity', according to Smith, 'involves some sense of political community, history, territory, patria, citizenship, common values and traditions' (Smith 1991: 9). He argues that 'nations must have a measure of common culture and a civic ideology, a set of common understandings and aspirations, sentiments and ideas, that bind the population together in their homeland' (Smith 1991: 11). Adding that, the agencies of popular socialization – primarily the public system of education and the mass media – have been handed the task of ensuring a common public mass culture (Smith 1991: 11), an idea central to Ernest Gellner's own theory of nationalism formulated in his seminal book *Nations and Nationalism* (1983).

Smith considers national identity as multi-dimensional and lists five fundamental attributes:

1 historic territory or homeland
2 common myths and historical memories
3 a common, mass public culture
4 common legal rights and duties for all members
5 common economy with territorial mobility for members (Smith 1991: 14)

Smith's definition of national identity has been left untouched since its early formulation in 1991. As I have argued earlier on, in my view, the substantial changes which he has introduced to his definition of the nation (Smith 2002) are motivated by the need to allow for the existence of some nations in pre-modern times, one of the main assertions of Smith's theory, and by the urgency to overcome the amalgamation of nation and state characteristic of his approach. In spite of this, however, he has not yet produced a modified definition of national identity. For Smith, national identity continues to involve citizenship understood as 'common legal rights and duties for all members' and I believe that this seriously hampers the consistency of his theory for the following reasons:

(a) If national identity is to be based upon a common mass public culture and is to include citizenship, then it could not be found in pre-modern times when citizenship was restricted to the few. This contradicts Smith's position as developed in his latest piece 'When is a nation?' where he writes: '…we saw cases of strongly expressed national sentiments and national identity in pre-modern epochs, at least among the educated elite' (Smith 2002: 16).

(b) By including citizenship as one of the features of national identity, he is assuming that this is exclusively associated with the modern nation-state. To consider this point further, we should examine what Smith refers to as the external and internal functions of national identity. For him the former comprise territorial, economic and political functions while the latter refer to the socialization of the members as 'nationals' and 'citizens' through media and education (Smith 1991: 17). Smith defines national identity as a

quality shared by the citizens of the state and he completely ignores that, in many cases, nation and state are not coextensive. Are we then to assume that Catalan, Quebecker, Scottish, Basque, Flemish and Corsican national identities do not exist? Should we ignore the fact that citizens of a single state may have different national identities?

In my view, it is paramount to discern between nation-states and nations without states (Guibernau 1999), because having or not having a state makes a great difference in terms of the access to power and resources enjoyed by a nation and, even more crucially, in its international status. Effectively, nations without states are excluded from direct representation in the major international and transnational organizations and institutions such as the EU, NAFTA, NATO, the IMF, the UN, etc.

Moreover, the chances of a nation without a state to promote its own national identity depend on two main factors. First, the nature of the state within which the nation is included, in particular its attitude towards internal diversity. As I have showed elsewhere, nations without states find themselves in radically different scenarios throughout the world; these encompass cultural recognition, political autonomy, federation and denial and repression (Guibernau 1999: ch. 2). Second, the existence of an alternative elite ready to provide cultural, historical, political and economic arguments to foster and sustain the distinctive character of the stateless nation and to legitimize its will to decide upon its political future, whatever this might be. Such intellectuals tend to be subversive and construct a discourse that undermines the current order of things while offering an alternative, which lies at the heart of their nationalist discourse.

Part Two
National identity in the twenty-first century

I argue that national identity is a modern phenomenon of a fluid and dynamic nature, one by means of which a community sharing a particular set of characteristics is led to the subjective belief that its members are ancestrally related.

Belief in a shared culture, history, traditions, symbols, kinship, language, religion, territory, founding moment, and destiny have been invoked, with varying intensity at different times and places, by peoples claiming to share a particular national identity.

Generally, national identity is applied to citizens of a nation-state. There are other cases, however, where national identity is shared among individuals belonging to a nation without a state of their own. Memories of a time when the nation was independent, endured collective oppression, or attained international leadership, together with the current desire for self-determination, strengthen a sense of common identity among those who belong to the nation,

even if it lacks a state. National identity reflects the sentiment of belonging to the nation regardless of whether it has or does not have a state of its own.

In my view, national identity has five dimensions: psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political.

Psychological dimension

The psychological dimension of national identity arises from the consciousness of forming a group based on the 'felt' closeness uniting those who belong to the nation. Such closeness can remain latent for years and suddenly come to the surface whenever the nation is confronted with an external or internal enemy – real, potential or constructed – threatening its people, its prosperity, its traditions and culture, its territory, its international standing or its sovereignty.

Smith insists on the subjective nature of national identity's components (e.g., Smith 2002). In my view, the most relevant quality of those components is not whether they are or not subjective, rather what matters is whether they are *felt* as real by those sharing a common identity. And, throughout time, they have proved to be felt with great intensity because people have been in the past, and still are, prepared to make sacrifices and ultimately die for their nations. But, why is this so? Sharing a national identity generates an emotional bond among fellow nationals, which, as Connor puts it, is fundamentally psychological and non-rational. It is not irrational, only 'beyond reason' (Connor 1994b). This is so because, basically, a nation is a group of people who *feel* that they are ancestrally related. In Connor's view, the nation 'is the largest group that can command a person's loyalty because of felt kinship ties; it is, from this perspective, the fully extended family'. However, 'the sense of unique descent, need not, and *in nearly all* cases *will not*, accord with factual history' (Connor 1994b: 202) since nearly all nations originate from the mixing of peoples from various ethnic origins. For this reason, what matters is not chronological or factual history but sentient or felt history.

The attributes sustaining the belief in common ancestry are key to national identity and foster a sense of belonging which generally engenders loyalty and social coherence among fellow-nationals, who often, but not always, are also fellow-citizens.

In certain circumstances, sentiments of love and hate are intensely felt and rapturously manifested by those who belong to the same nation. Political leaders and agitators are fully aware of this and it is not uncommon for them to seek an emotional response from fellow-nationals. Calls for action and sacrifice in the face of threats to the nation are accompanied by appeals to the 'unique character' and 'qualities' of those who belong. This has the capacity to elevate people beyond their daily lives and routines, to transport them to a higher level in which their actions gain meaning and are qualified as crucial for the survival and prosperity of the nation. The strength of emotions overrides reason, because it is through a sentimental identification with the nation that

individuals transcend their finite and, at least for some, meaningless lives. Their efforts and sacrifices become worthwhile, even heroic, and the conviction of having contributed to a higher aim, that of preserving and enhancing the nation, increases the individuals' self-esteem.

Cultural dimension

Smith has produced the most comprehensive analysis of the cultural components of national identity to date. Values, beliefs, customs, conventions, habits, languages and practices are transmitted to the new members who receive the culture of a particular nation. The process of identification with a specific culture implies a strong emotional investment able to foster solidarity bonds among the members of a given community who come to recognize one another as fellow nationals (Gellner 1983). Furthermore, they imagine and feel their community as separate and distinct from others (Anderson 1983).

Communication among fellow-nationals requires the use of a shared language. To a great extent, vernacular languages are employed, though there are some exceptions. For instance, where the vernacular language has been lost, this is replaced by the state's language. In Scotland the practical disappearance of Gaelic was primarily due to the imposition of English. In France, the imposition of French involved the irreversible weakening of other languages spoken within the territorial boundaries of the French nation-state such as Basque, Breton, Catalan and Occitan. There are cases where more than one language is official within the nation and they are both employed. This is the case in Quebec (French and English) and Catalonia (Catalan and Spanish in post-Francoist Spain) (Guibernau 2004).

Historical dimension

How far back in time should members of a given nation be able to locate their origin as a community? A century? Five centuries? Fifty years? There is no written rule about this. In fact, while nations such as England or France can easily trace back their origins to medieval times, other peoples such as Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Persians, Japanese and Chinese go back to antiquity. In contrast, the USA, Australia or Canada can claim a mere 200–300 years of history.

But, why is antiquity relevant? Antiquity is employed as a source of legitimacy for a nation and its culture. It binds individuals to a past stretching over their life spans and those of their recent ancestors. Antiquity stresses one of the key elements of identity, that is continuity, and, in so doing, it contributes to the preservation of the collective self. Acknowledging and documenting cultural antiquity is a modern activity which also provides nations and their cultures with a distinguished pedigree, so that when individuals look back in time they are not confronted with a blank picture about their own collective origin, but reassured by the deeds of their ancestors. Antiquity feeds the subjective belief in a kinship relation right at the heart of

the nation. Culture is perceived as the particular way of being in the world adopted by each nation.

Members of a nation tend to feel proud of their ancient roots and generally interpret them as a sign of resilience, strength and even superiority when compared with other nations unable to display a rich past during which the nation became prominent.

Nations remember admirable and awesome experiences, but they also recall dreadful moments of humiliation and suffering. Catalonia's national day commemorates the occupation of Barcelona by Spanish forces led by Felipe V (11 September 1714) and the subsequent proscription of its language and the abolition of its autonomous institutions. Jews observe key dates of the Holocaust and revere the victims of the concentration camps, such as Auschwitz, where millions lost their lives. Only two years have passed since 11 September 2001, when the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington were victims of a terrorist attack, and this date has already acquired meaning for millions of citizens of the USA who unite in grief to remember those killed or injured.

The selective use of history provides nationals with a collective memory filled with transcendental moments in the life of the community, events and experiences that allow people to increase their self-esteem by feeling part of a community which proved capable of great things and that might also be ready to become again a beacon to the world. All nations possess or construct some features that make them special and in a certain way, 'superior' to the rest. They all excel in something, no matter what, that makes them and their members unique. History contributes to the construction of a certain image of the nation and represents the cradle where national character was forged.

Territorial dimension

For centuries, the rural community and the local village have represented the limits of the individual's universe. Traditionally, the life of individuals revolved around a small territory where family, work, religious and administrative structures were concentrated. In turn, the individual's identity was defined by the roles he or she played within that limited territory.

A great shift was required for people to conceive the nation as their home, since a large sector of the population had never travelled around their own nation's territory. Even today, a fair number of people only know of some parts of the nation they belong to through the media and education. In some countries, it is quite common to discover that a considerable proportion of the population who, at some point, have travelled abroad, mainly on holiday, are lacking a direct knowledge of their own nations.

Print and other forms of media have contributed to individuals being able to imagine their nations and regard them as homelands (Anderson 1983). Smith emphasizes that 'nations, for nationalists, are special kinds of spatial

communities, those that can trace their origins or "roots" to specific ancestral landscapes' (Smith 2002: 22).

International media and communications have brought about greater awareness of the territorial limits of nations, peoples and cultures. It is widely accepted that globalization has increased interconnectedness, and that it has heightened interdependence. But, how do ordinary people react to events taking place outside the territorial boundaries of their nation? Do they feel with the same intensity about loss of life, natural disasters or great sports achievements, regardless of where they take place? Surely not. While it is true that events happening miles away can have an impact upon our daily lives – changes in the Tokyo stock exchange, ecological disasters…- we do not react in the same manner to famine, war, epidemics, terrorist attacks or sport world records if they occur beyond the boundaries of our nation and they have 'foreigners' as their subjects.

In addition, within the nation, we tend to feel more intensely about events happening closer to us; this is within our region, city or local village. Certainly it appears much more difficult to feel for 'strangers', yet not all 'strangers' are perceived in the same way. Thus, in Britain, a citizen of the USA may be perceived as 'less foreign' than an EU citizen, and be regarded as 'almost' a fellow-national when compared with Japanese, Peruvian or Algerian nationals.

Globalization conveys visibility and awareness of the 'other', but for the large majority of peoples, the territorial boundaries of the nation signal the limits of their homeland and fellow-nationals are usually portrayed as if they were more 'human' than outsiders, as deserving our support, concern and nurture. Filial sentiments toward fellow-nationals are not matched by feelings for 'foreigners', 'unknown peoples', 'strangers', maybe potential 'enemies'.

In spite of globalization and emerging cosmopolitanism, which so far is primarily an elite phenomenon, local and national attachments remain strong and I expect them to continue to be so in the foreseeable future. This is not a process opposed to cosmopolitanism, but a process parallel to it. So-called 'citizens of the world' are bound to be primarily concerned about their nations, and this should not prevent them from displaying greater awareness and increasing sensitivity toward 'strangers'.

The dichotomy between the 'national' and the 'cosmopolitan' could be partially solved by Durkheim's identification of what he calls the 'national ideal' with the 'human ideal'. He argues that each state becomes an organ of the 'human ideal' in so far as it assumes that its main task is not to expand by extending its borders, but to increase the level of its member's morality (Durkheim 1973: 101).

Political dimension

In what follows I seek to redress Smith's failure to address the political aspects of nations and national identity. In my view, the political dimension of national identity derives from its relation with the modern nation-state. As a political institution ruling over a diverse population, from its foundational moment the

nation-state pursued the cultural and linguistic homogenization of an otherwise diverse citizenry. This is, the state selected and imposed the culture and language of the dominant group within its territory and sought to create a single nation out of the diverse nations or parts of nations forming it. Conquests, annexations and marriages brought together peoples who were foreign to each other and saw rulers who could not understand, nor be understood by, their subjects. For centuries, nobody objected to the legitimacy of such political arrangements. The distance between elites and the masses was epitomized in the 'foreign' character of some rulers who shared very little with their subjects.

In my view, it is essential to acknowledge that nations have an ethnic origin, as Smith has proved throughout his work. In contrast with his theory, though, I locate the rise of the nation-state, national identity and nationalism in late eighteenth-century Europe and I consider their emergence linked to the ideas which gave rise to the American Revolution in 1776 and the French Revolution in 1789.

I understand the rise of the nation-state as the product of a multidimensional process changing the relations of power in society. The main elements of this process included the consolidation of territorial units by bureaucratic absolutist states that for the first time were able to hold the monopoly of the means of violence inside their territory; the transformation of frontiers delimiting different states in clearly fixed borders; the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a new class especially receptive to the ideas of the Enlightenment; and the new role of monarchs and rulers which was characterized by a fundamental change in the relation between rulers and ruled.

Before the eighteenth century, the right to rule was legitimated by appealing to God's will, royal blood or superior physical strength and these reasons were premised upon the belief that legitimacy came from above, rather than from the ruled. A radical shift occurred as a consequence of the spread of the new ideas of the *philosophes* emphasizing the cult of liberty, equality and particularly the idea of state power rooted in popular consent.

The whole process of translating the ideas of popular sovereignty into universal adult suffrage required a long and hard struggle during which the ideas of 1789 began a slow but compelling process, and permeated to varying degrees first the educated classes and then the masses in the various European countries. Another relevant feature of the French Revolution was the emphasis it placed on education, creating as a result the first comprehensive system of national education to raise new generations of virtuous and patriotic citizens. Only a common education, it was felt, could realize the unity of the fatherland and the union of its citizens.

This framework made possible the rise of modern nationalism, a device which proved to be exceedingly useful for refocusing a people's loyalty away from the monarch. Monarchy by divine right was an elegantly simple device for evoking emotional attachment. But, an aggregate of sovereign citizens could hardly perform that function. Then the nation, personified through symbols and rituals which symbolically recreate a sense of 'people', became the focus of a new kind of attachment. It helped to implement nationalism, the division of Europe into

nation-states which favoured the definition of citizenship by nationality as well as by legal, political and social rights. Thus, as Heater argues, the French Revolution politicized the cultural concept of nationality and subsequently, during much of the nineteenth century, the association of nationalism with popular sovereignty encouraged the liberals of central and southern Europe to plot and agitate for the realization of the ideal in their own lands (Heater 1990: 21).

National identity refers to the set of attributes and beliefs shared by those who belong to the same nation and, as shown above, not all nations have a state of their own. The political aspect of national identity, when applied to the nation-state, focuses upon those state's strategies – often referred to as 'nation-building'- destined to foster a cohesive, loyal and, up to a point, homogeneous citizenry (Guibernau 2001: 242–68). Among the main strategies generally employed by the state in its pursuit of a single national identity capable of uniting its citizens are:

1 The construction and dissemination of a certain *image* of the 'nation', often based upon the dominant nation or ethnic group living within the state's boundaries and comprising a common history, a shared culture and a demarcated territory.
2 The creation and spread of a set of symbols and rituals charged with the mission of reinforcing a sense of community among citizens.
3 The advancement of citizenship involving a well-defined set of civil and legal rights, political rights and duties as well as socio-economic rights. The state by conferring rights upon its members favours the rise of sentiments of loyalty towards itself. It also establishes a crucial distinction between those *included* and those *excluded* from the community of citizens.
4 The creation of common enemies, imminent, potential or invented.
5 The progressive consolidation of national education and media systems.

Some of the state's citizens, however, may have a national identity different from that promoted by it. People of immigrant origin, ethnic communities and those belonging to national minorities may stand in opposition to the national identity instilled by the state.

There are at least two different approaches to the compatibility or coexistence of different identities within a single political institution. Some argue that the solution lies in the generation of multiple identities, although hardly do they ever specifically refer to multiple 'national' identities. Often they allude to ethnic, regional, national and transnational identities implicitly assuming that different types of identities are compatible precisely because they operate at different levels.

In contrast, others argue that people who share a common citizenship may have different national identities, thus separating membership of the state from the sentiment of belonging to the nation. At first sight, this may appear as a plausible solution, however, in my view it is not straightforward to sustain such a separation in so far as the nation is being regarded as a source of legitimacy for state power.

Conclusion

This paper has unravelled a fundamental flaw in Smith's classical theory of nations and national identity, this is, his failure to offer a clear-cut distinction between the concepts of nation and state.

I have shown that the ethnosymbolist approach, despite offering a rich and path-breaking contribution to the study of the cultural aspects of nations and national identity, fails to consider the political consequences of its findings. In my view, the dissociation between the cultural and the political aspects of nations and national identity casts some doubts over the ability of ethnosymbolism to capture the full meaning of nations and national identity in modern societies. The political consequences of being a nation, with or without a state and the role of the state in the construction of national identity cannot be ignored.

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