

Nation building through an identity realisation sociology essay



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Nation-building refers to the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state. This process aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run. Nation-building can involve the use of propaganda or major infrastructure development to foster social harmony and economic growth. Originally, nation-building referred to the efforts of newly-independent nations, notably the nations of Africa, Post-Soviet states, to reshape colonial territories that had been carved out by colonial powers without regard to ethnic or other boundaries. These reformed states would then become viable and coherent national entities. Nation-building included the creation of national paraphernalia such as flags, anthems, national days, national stadiums, national airlines, national languages, and national myths. At a deeper level, national identity needed to be deliberately constructed by molding different groups into a nation, especially since colonialism had used divide and rule tactics to maintain its domination.[1]

National identity derives from a unique blend of human will and material circumstance. To understand how people or states identify themselves, and therefore what interests and visions motivate them. So some questions of national identity are not simple. National identity exists alongside many other meanings of identity. It does not always override them all, or not in every circumstance. Consider personal identity both philosophically and psychologically. Three questions can be asked: How do each of you perceive

yourself, how do you want to be perceived by others, and how do others actually perceive you? These three questions are obviously related, but do not always give the same answer at all times and in all circumstances. Of course, this term was investigated and examined before. For instance, I chose Anthony D. Smith's explanation for it, and I must say that I agree with him. So, he says that, whatever else it may be, what we mean by 'national' identity involves some sense of political community, however tenuous. A political community in turn implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for all the members of the community. It also suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong.[2] This was very much what the philosophers had in mind when they defined a nation as a community of people obeying the same laws and institutions within a given territory. This is, of course, a peculiarly Western conception of the nation. But then the Western experience has exerted a powerful, indeed the leading, influence on our conception of the unit we call the 'nation'. A new kind of policy - the rational state - and a new kind of community - the territorial nation - first emerged in the West, in close conjunction with each other. They left their imprint on subsequent non-Western conceptions, even when the latter diverged from their norms. But it is worth definition of nation. According to this view, nations must possess compact, well-defined territories. People and territory must, as it were, belong to each other, in the way that the early Dutch, for example, saw themselves as formed by the high seas and as forging (literally) the earth they possessed and made their own.[3] But the

earth in question cannot be just anywhere; it is not any stretch of land. It is, and must be, the 'historic' land, the 'homeland'. A 'historic land' is one where terrain and people have exerted mutual, and beneficial, influence over several generations. The homeland becomes a repository of historic memories and associations, the place where 'our' sages, saints and heroes lived, worked, prayed and fought. All this makes the homeland unique. Another thing, by which the national identity can be defined, is the idea of patria, a community of laws and institutions with a single political will. It explains at least some common regulating institutions that will give expression to common political sentiments and purposes. So, concurrent with the growth of sense of legal and political community we may trace a sense of legal equality among the members of that community. It also implies a common code of laws over and above local laws, together with agencies for their enforcement, courts of final appeal and the like. As important is the acceptance that, in principle, all members of the nation are legally equal and that the rich and powerful are bound by the laws of the patria. Finally, the legal equality of members of a political community in its demarcated homeland was felt to presuppose a measure of common values and traditions among the population, or at any rate its 'core' community. In other words, 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.

The existence of these common assumptions allows us to list the fundamental features of national identity as follows:

1. an historic territory, or homeland

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2. common myths and historical memories
3. a common, mass public culture
4. common legal rights and duties for all members
5. a common economy with territorial mobility for members.[4]

By moving to another term, nation, I can make a result of the 'nation'.

Nation can be defined as a named 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.[5]

Such a working definition invented the complex and abstract nature of national identity. The nation, in fact, draws on elements of other kinds of collective identity, describes not only for the way in which national identity can be combined with these other types of identity-class, religious or ethnic-but also for the different rearrangements of nationalism, the ideology, with other ideologies like liberalism, fascism and communism.

Such a definition of national identity also sets it clearly apart from any understanding of the state. The latter refers exclusively to public institutions, differentiated from, and autonomous of, other social institutions and exercising a monopoly of coercion and extraction within a given territory. The nation, on the other hand, signifies a cultural and political bond, uniting in a single political community all who share an historic culture and homeland.

This lack of congruence between the state and the nation is exemplified in the many 'plural' states today. Indeed, Walker Connor's estimate in the early 1970s showed that only about 10 per cent of states could claim to be true 'nation-states', in the sense that the state's boundaries coincide with the nation's and that the total population of the state share a single ethnic culture. While most states aspire to become nation-states in this sense, they tend to limit their claims to legitimacy to an aspiration for political unity and popular sovereignty that, even in old-established Western states, risks being challenged by ethnic communities within their borders.

These cases, and there are many of them, illustrate the profound gulf between the concepts of the state and the nation, a gulf that the historical material to be discussed shortly underlines.[6]

To gain a fuller understanding of what nationhood involves, it may be helpful to clear away two common misunderstandings that bedevil this question.

[7]The first is the confusion of 'nation' and

'state'. In ordinary speech 'nation' is sometimes used as a synonym for state: when someone refers to 'the newly emerging nations of the Third World', it is very likely that they are really talking about newly created states. This usage is not likely to be helpful if we are trying to clarify the principle of nationality, since one of the main issues we have to consider is precisely the relationship between nations and states, and in particular the question whether each nation has a right to its own state. When this question is posed, 'nation' must refer to a community of people with an aspiration to be politically self determining, and 'state' must refer to the set

of political institutions that they may aspire to possess for themselves. Let us say, following Weber, that a state is a body that successfully claims a monopoly of legitimate force in a particular territory.[8]We count states by seeing how many such bodies there are. Some of these states will be multinational, in the sense that they exercise their rule over several discrete nations. The Soviet Union was such a state; rather unusually, it openly conceded that the peoples it governed were of different nationalities. (More than one hundred were recognized.) Rather less common is the case where a single nation is for historical reasons divided between two states. This was the case for the Germans before the reunification of 1990, and is still the case for the Chinese and Koreans today. A third case occurs where people of a single nationality are scattered as minorities in a number of states-the position today of the Kurds and the Palestinians. None of this would make sense if we did not understand 'nation' and 'state' in such a way as to make it an empirical question whether those who compose a nation are all united politically within a single state.

If we look to history, nations emerge over time as a result of numerous historical processes. As a consequence, it is a pointless undertaking to attempt to locate a precise moment when any particular nation came into existence, as if it were a manufactured product designed by an engineer. Let us examine why this is so. All nations have historical antecedents, whether tribe, city-state, or kingdom. These historically earlier societies are important components in the formation of nations. For example, the English nation emerged out of the historically earlier societies of the Saxons, Angles, and Normans. However, these historical antecedents are never merely just facts,

because key to the existence of the nation are memories that are shared among each of those many individuals who are members of the nation about the past of their nation, including about those earlier societies. Every nation has its own understanding of its distinctive past that is conveyed through stories, myths, and history. Whether historically accurate or not, these memories contribute to the understanding of the present that distinguishes one nation from another. This component of time - when an understanding of the past forms part of the present - is characteristic of the nation and is called 'temporal depth'.

As the mind of the individual develops within various contexts, such as the family or different educational institutions, it seeks out those various and fluctuating traditions that are 'at hand'.

The child learns, for example, to speak the language of his or her nation and what it means to be a member of that nation as expressed through its customs and laws. These traditions become

incorporated into the individual's understanding of the self. When those traditions that make up part of one's self-conception are shared by other individuals as part of their self-conception, one is then both related to those other individuals, and aware of the relation. The relation itself, for example living in the same geographical area or speaking a common language, is what is meant

by the term 'collective consciousness'. This term in no way implies the existence of a group mind or a combination of biological instincts, as if

humans were a colony of ants. Rather, it refers to a social relation of each of
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a number of individuals as a consequence of those individuals participating in the same evolving tradition. When those individuals not only participate in the same tradition but also understand themselves as being different from those who do not, then there exists a self-designating shared belief, which is called a ' collective self-consciousness', that is, a distinctive culture.[9]

Also, there is a very short and well defined explanation of ' nation' by Ernest Renan. He says, that, a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things constitute this soul: the past and the present. The past refers to the possession in common of a rich legacy of remembrances; the present is the actual consent, the desire to live together, the will to continue as a nation. To have accomplished great things together in the past, and to wish to do so again, that is the essential condition for being a nation. A nation is a grand solidarity constituted by the sentiment of sacrifices. A great aggregation of men, with a healthy spirit and warmth of heart, creates a moral conscience which is called a nation. This explanation fully concludes the definition of nation for better understanding.

So, if we talk about nationality