Journal of Liberty and International Affairs | **Vol. 3, Supp. 1, 2017 | eISSN 1857-9760**
Published online by the Institute for Research and European Studies at www.e-jlia.com



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Peer review method: Double-Blind
Date of acceptance: March 30, 2017
Date of publication: July 26, 2017
Original scientific article
UDC 323.11:327.39(4)

Indexing
Abstracting

NEW FORMS OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN EUROPE

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Abstract

This article suggests an answer to the question of national identity and belonging to nation-states in an avant-garde Europe. In other words, it examines: what might the avant-garde of national identity in Europe in the XXI century be; will nationalities and simple belonging to nation-states be sufficient for Europeans; what is the vitality and the potential of pan-European identity to fill the gaps of national identity; and how the two strains of belonging relate to each other. The central argument is built around the idea of the clash between neonationalism and postnationalism in the form of pan-Europeanism, in which new forms of collective identity in Europe are emerging.

Key words: Collective identity; nationalism; national belonging; European nations; postnationalism; neonationalism; pan-Europeanism

INTRODUCTION

There is not a piece of inhabited land on our Earth today that is not under the claims of a nation-state. Being born without a nationality is rare case and a precondition of a deprived troublesome life. Our identification and self-realization is penetrated by the sense of belonging to a motherland, to a certain community, to a nation. Nationality is a feature on our passports, a permit to travel or an obstacle to such; it is the language that we speak, the history that we were taught, the holidays that we celebrate; it is all the familiar things that we first learnt in our lives and became so used to. Nationality is an extension to the belonging of a nuclear family, of kinship, of a hometown, of a region, of a group. We are nationals of a nation-state or nation-states. Globalization has challenged national belonging by opening borders, extensive mobility, increased travelling, faster and more accessible communication and transport than ever, free trade, mass media, new technologies, and an almost constant connection to the World Wide Web. The appearance of more and more transnational families, expats, refugees, freelancers and global nomads, migrants of various

kinds and people who simply do not have a permanent address, permanent location or anything permanent at all has contributed to the creation of multicultural societies with a flexible sense of belonging. The universalization of cultural patterns and the emergence of so-called global culture started to transform the means of belonging, but do not seem to have overcome the importance of nationality and the relevance of national identity. On the contrary, belonging to nation-states has even been revived in response to the globalization and we are witnessing the rise of nationalisms and nation-ness in Europe. Thus, postnationalism does not seem to be a non-nationalism, but rather a brand new form of nationalism, which is in a process of reinvention and reinforcement.

This article explores the transformation of national belonging in a postnational Europe. Its main argument is that at the beginning of the XXI century we are witnessing a clash between the idea of pan-Europeanism and the various forms of neonationalism in European states. This as such is not an isolated European phenomenon, but rather a part of a global trend present in other countries and regions, among which are the United States, Turkey, China, India, Russia, the Middle Eastern countries, etc. with their own specificities. The nation-building processes in Europe from the XIX and the XX centuries, which led to the formation of the European nation-states as we know them now, may look similar to the present neonationalism, but there are essential differences between them in their driving forces and the surrounding environment. On the other hand, the idea of pan-Europeanism has started losing popularity, being perceived as an antonym and a threat to the sovereignty of nation-states. Thus, the notion of national identity and the mere belonging to nation-states from the XX century is not sufficient to correspond with the reality of the 21st century. The collective identity of people is going through a transformation and new forms of group belonging are being created in Europe. The main question addressed here is what belonging to nation-states would mean in such a case, and what its alternative would be in an avant-garde Europe.

This article is divided in three sections, exploring first the idea of pan-Europeanism and the challenges that globalization and the liberal order have presented to the Westphalian system. In the second section, the emergence of neonationalism and its narratives in the European context are discussed together with the rise of the right-wing parties, populism, and protectionism. The subject of the third section is the clash between these two opposing ideas, which are leading to new forms of national belonging in the XXI century in Europe.

The main drive behind this article is to demonstrate that the notion of nation-ness or the nationalist discourse has reappeared as a vibrant and live factor of the political rhetoric of the 21st century. I have chosen the case of Europe for such an analysis because of its particularity and exceptionality. There is no other region in the world that has decided to transfer so much national sovereignty to a supranational structure such as the European Union. The concurrent development of the national and European sense of belonging to a rather bigger notion is unique in this regard as well as the mentalities, attitudes, societal structure, and identities in contemporary Europe. Furthermore, the versatility of this "multinational" population, the richness of its unique historic experiences, and the almost miraculous way in which it is kept together make it even more challenging and inspiring for analysis. Hence, what it means to belong in Europe today remains an immense open question, to which this article will provide an insight for the composition of the big picture.

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Published online by the Institute for Research and European Studies at www.e-jlia.com

THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALIZATION TO THE WESTPHALIAN SYSTEM

"A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle".
Ernest Renan

Nation-building processes in Europe

Belonging to a nation-state and being a part of a nation is a result of the process of national identity building, which is linked to collective memory from the past and the specifics of present conditions of one's participation in the community. The Westphalian system of international relations refers to the Peace of Westphalia, signed in 1648, which put an end to the Thirty Years War between the major European states. The Westphalian principle is the concept of sovereignty of the state, which makes the states the main actors of the international system and presumes non-interference in other states domestic affairs.

First, I would like to provide a very brief historic background on the foundation of the nation-state and the link between the changes in the actor self-identification and the changes in the structure of the international system, which are interdependent in the actor-structure paradigm. We can identify at least three fundamental changes in the process of collective self-identification that have changed the international system – the transition of sovereignty from God in the Middle Ages (feudal era) to the King in the Renaissance (early-modern state), and then to the people after the French Revolution and the Enlightenment with the formation of the nation-state (modern state). The sovereign is tightly linked to the collective identity of the group, since sovereignty is the source of legitimacy of the power and the ones in power choose the collective memory (what is to be remembered and glorified or grieved for and what is to be forgotten) of the group. As Jan-Werner Müller argues, collective memory and collective identity are mutually constitutive (Müller 2002). Thus, it could be argued that the collective identity construction, based on the collective memory of the group, is a top-down process driven and managed by the political elites, as the case of the use of national identity belonging in Europe. However, the instrumentalist idea of the political elite managing the collective identity of the group is not shared by some scholars in the field, such as Ernest Renan, Pierre Nora, etc.

Ernest Renan provides one of the first and most influential definitions of the "nation" in 1882, stating that nations are "cultural entities willed into existence by the daily plebiscite of believing communities" (Renan 1882, 1). He also adds that a nation is "a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future". Even in this early definition of a nation, we can distinguish the temporal characteristics of past, present and future and their interconnectedness in the creation of a nation.

Renan identifies two elements that merge into one in the construction of the nation – one from the past and one from the present. "One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form" (Renan 1882, 10). These two characteristics of common past and present consent of it could be found in almost any definition of a nation.

Another important feature of Renan's thinking about the nation is the "spiritual principle", according to which a nation is "the outcome of the profound complications of history; it is a spiritual family not a group determined by the shape of the earth" (Renan 1882, p.9). The so-called "spiritual principle" plays an important role in the understanding of a nation as an entity with distinguished characteristics and identity on its own and not just a mere sum of the individual identities of the people who form the nation. With the assumption that the nation is a separate being, we accept that there is a process of national identity going on driven according to the structure of the governance of the nation and the context, in which it exists.

Renan's influence can be observed in the work of other scholars on the subject. It is important to mention the contribution of Maurice Halbwachs to the debate, which initially developed the concept of collective memory (Halbwachs 1950). Collective memory, especially in the form of national memory, becomes central in the thinking of other scholars about national identity. In addition to the national memory aspect, Pierre Nora argues that once the traditional modes of transmission of the past (such as the various institutional channels) are released to the public domain, we can have emancipatory versions of the past (Nora 1996). That means that the content of the national memory becomes dependent on its interpretation by the present. This is a rather constructivist approach, which was also taken by Benedict Anderson, who provides an anthropological definition of the nation, as he describes it himself. A nation is "an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign", according to him. The "nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1983, 5-7). This imaginary quality of the nation and its "sheer constructedness" Jan-Werner Müller finds in the collective memory.

Here we can also add the contribution of the Russian historian Natalia Narochnitskaya, who defines the nation as a "successively living entity bound by spirit, world-view and common perceptions of good and evil, and historic emotions" (Narochnitskaya,1996). This definition is not too far away from Renan's description of the nation, including the temporal dimensions of past and present, together with a constructivist vision of the "common perceptions", tying the living entity together.

Another vision of the nation can be found in the thinking that lies behind ethnic nationalism, which focuses most of all on the value and appreciation of the ethnic past. It derives from the Romantic tradition, according to which a people are seen as mystical collective entity; it has its own fate and soul. This definition is not so distant from Renan's description, who also points out the "soul" feature of the nation. The link between past and present is extrapolated in absolute terms by ethnic nationalism, in which the nation is naturally given as timeless phenomena. The term of "ethnic nationalism" is used by Anthony Smith, who perceives it as a non-Western concept, opposed to the Western view of nationalism. In the argument of Smith the so-called "ethnie" plays an important role in the comprehension of the nation and its boundaries (Smith 2001). In the ideological discourse discussed by Smith, a nation is "a felt and lived community, a category of behavior as much as imagination, and it is one that requires of the members certain kinds of action" (Smith 2001, 10). He also takes into account the fact that the definitions of the "nation" range from those that stress "objective" factors such as language, religion and customs, territory and institutions, creating the demos, to those that emphasize purely "subjective" factors, such as attitudes, perceptions and sentiments, building up the ethnos. While the objective factors seem to treat the subject from a more realistic approach and the

subjective ones seem to belong to the constructivist school of thought, an accurate definition of a nation should span the whole "objective-subjective" spectrum, including both the demos and the ethnos in the definition of a nation. Therefore, Smith precisely argues that the nations are "felt and lived communities whose members share a homeland and a culture" (Smith 2001, 12). The central point of Anthony Smith's understanding of the nation lies in the connection between the present and the past and the role that the present plays in the creation of the past. He distinguishes four schools of thought with different approaches to the past-present linkage – nationalists, perennialists (primordialists), modernists and post-modernists.

The first two groups see the past as a solid construct that provides the present with content to justify the nation, while the latter two groups see the past through the lens of the present as something vague and open to interpretations according to the needs of the present. For nationalists the nation is part of the natural order and the only task of the present is to remind of the glorious past that needs to be recreated. The perennialists (or primordialists) share a similar view that the identity of a nation is unchanging. However, they do not see the nation as part of the natural order, but rather the ethnic foundation that can be used to build a nation. For modernists the process of nation-building is a modern phenomenon, which does not necessarily require ethnic heritages; therefore, the past is rather more irrelevant than the genuine source of the national identity.

Post-modernists have rethought this idea. They recognize that the nation is a product of modern culture, but the liberal use of the elements of the past makes up the imagined political community called "nation", so the past is still relevant. For them the past is the reflection of the present.

None of these paradigms seems to be sufficient to explain the complexity of nation formation; therefore, we should instead use a holistic approach to explain the process of nation-building and national identity in Europe. Anthony Smith also acknowledges this fact and suggests that all four schools of thought play a vital role in the explanation of nation-building. Smith challenges the assumption that nations are purely modern and that the limit within which they can expand is defined by the ethnic heritage (ethnie), which is built of "more permanent cultural attributes" like memory, myth, symbols and values (Smith 1998, 134). In the relationship between the ethnic past and the nationalist present there should be selection criteria for what is to be remembered and how. The criteria are defined and executed by the locus of power within the nation. This is also part of the reasons why collective identities are not solid and permanent, but rather subject to change over time.

Miroslav Hroch provides a more pragmatic definition of the nation as "a large social group integrated not by one, but by a combination of several kinds of objective relationships (economic, political, linguistic, cultural, religious, geographical, historical), and their subjective reflection in collective consciousness" (Hroch 1996, 79). In contrast to the ethnic nationalists, he does not see the nation as an "eternal category", but rather as "the product of a long and complicated process of historical development" (Hroch 1996, 79).

In the interplay of the objective-subjective elements of the nation, he shares the same point of view as other scholars such as Anthony Smith. However, Hroch's perception of the nation goes in different direction with regard to the three irreplaceable characteristics of the nation:

> (1) a 'memory' of some common past, treated as a 'destiny' of the group - or at least of its core constituents; (2) a density of linguistic or cultural ties enabling a higher degree of social communication within the group than beyond it; (3) a conception of the equality of all members of the group organized as a civil society (Hroch 1996, 78-97).

Therefore, one might argue that his understanding of the nation is closer to the post-modernist school of thought, in which the natural foundation of unity of the nation comes from the common past, but does not end there. It is not a static concept, but a process, in which the social communication within the group determines the present organization of the group or as in the case of Hroch – the equality of all members.

All of those definitions of the nation have their flaws and could be a subject of critique for various reasons. For example, the critique may come for combining the conditions for the emergence of the nation with the outcomes in one definition, as Anthony Smith has been criticized for by liberal nationalists, such as Yael Tamir (Tamir 1993). Therefore, it is important to take into consideration the contribution of all the different schools of thought in the search for the most accurate definition of the nation, which is undoubtedly linked with the concept of nationalism.

My understanding of the "nation" in the case of Europe is closer to the post-modernist one in the way post-modernists see the role of the present in dealing with the past, but I also agree with Anthony Smith that the use of the ethnic past is not unlimited and the nation has certain margins to fit in, beyond which it cannot expand. The most important specificity about the nation as a group to which certain individuals have developed a sense of belonging is the organizational structure of the nation-state that makes its existence possible. With the change of the organizational structure of the society, the essence of the group and the sense of belonging also change.

Pan-Europeanism and postnationalism

> *"We live in a globalizing world. That means that all of us, consciously or not, depend on each other. Whatever we do or refrain from doing affects the lives of people who live in places we'll never visit."*
> **Zygmunt Bauman**

Jacques Delors' idea for avant-garde Europe or "Great Europe" would provide members with "an area of shared values lived out in the diversity of our cultures and our traditions" (Pusca 2004, 131). Such a statement builds upon the notion of European identity, which is still being constructed among the nations of the European Union, but which is facing more challenges deriving from the numerous internal and external crises confounding the Union today. I share the view that European identity and national identity are not interchangeable, but rather supplementary concepts, or at least they are such for now. Even though the focus of this article is the role and the future of national identity of Europeans within the European Union, its relation with European identity comes naturally and cannot be avoided.

Pan-Europeanism deals with the idea that European nations are part of a common European nation and there is a European culture composed of the different European cultures. The existence of the European Union as a supranational governmental structure further supports the idea of a common European identity among European nations. The process of European identity building would have probably gone flawlessly and merged the various national identities of European countries in a common pan-European identity, if the permissive consensus of European integration did not start breaking as has been happening over the last decade. The West has comfortably operated under the presumption that the liberal order that was established and spread across Europe after the end of the Cold War will see no end. Recent developments in the political life of the Old Continent have proven it wrong.

The processes of globalization have not skipped Europe in bringing various challenges to its course of development. During the last two decades of 20th century, the forces of globalization and interdependence led to international integration, and the erosion of Westphalian sovereignty. The European Union is the most explicit example of such integration. The critique derives from the Westphalian notion of the nation-state as a principal actor of the international system perceived as axiomatically given (Camilleri and Falk 1992). Transferring sovereignty from the national level to the supranational level has transformed the societal and political structure in Europe in a sui generis type of organization. Both the national identity with a certain nation and the European identity as a broader form of collectivity co-exist on the Old Continent and make it impossible to delimitate the various forms of collective identity.

Here comes the notion of postnationalism or non-nationalism, which describes the view that the national identity and nationalism are losing its importance. Globalization, interdependence and universalization of cultural patterns are fostering the alternative of nationalism, which is postnationalism. Even though the concepts are not necessarily mutually exclusive, they are opposite in their essence. The same factors that contribute to the overcoming of the nation-state and the demolition of the Westphalian system are also seen as a challenge to the creation of the so-called global society and the new world order beyond nations. The same political, economic and cultural processes fostering the argument that the world is so interconnected and globalized that nations and nation-states no longer have a place in it are strengthening the rise of a new wave of nationalism in Europe. The nation-state and the collective identity around it are the central question of both lines of thought: postnationalism and neonationalism. Both coexist and fragment the societies in Europe.

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NATIONALISM, NEONATIONALISM AND THE RISE OF POPULISM IN EUROPE

"Nationalism as we know it is the result of a form of state-sponsored branding."
Bryant McGill

Nationalism may be discussed from many different points of view – as the initial drive for nationalist movements in the process of nation-building in Europe, according to the study of Miroslav Hroch, or as the strong affiliation to the nation, as nation-ness, as an ideology, belief, sentiment or individual identification with the nation, depending on the perspective. There are also various interpretations of the causes of nationalism, described below according to the understanding of Anthony Smith.

One of the most important scholars on the subject of nationalism is Ernest Gellner. According to Gellner's understanding, nationalism is "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (Gellner 1981, 1).

Nationalism may be seen as both a sentiment and a movement, where the nationalist movement is initiated by national sentiment. He shares the modernist view that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, which appeared in order to accommodate the needs of the modern times or as functionalists may argue its shape serves its function. For him nationalism is a necessity for the ones in power to maintain the control over the population and therefore over the resources and their maintenance. A standardized cultural pattern is required to create the "we-feeling" and to secure the legitimacy of the power. Gellner sees nationalism as such a standardized cultural pattern emanating from the changes caused by the industrialization; the political and the national unit should be congruent for this purpose. His understanding of nationalism has been highly criticized mainly by his former student Anthony Smith due to the misread relationship between nationalism and industrialization. In a final debate with his former student, Gellner summarized his understanding of the nation and nationalism, underlining once again the importance of a common culture in which one feels incorporated and accepted and the membership in this community makes him part of the nation:

> The world as it is now is one where people have no stable position or structure. They are members of ephemeral professional bureaucracies which are not deeply internalized and which are temporary. They are members of increasingly loose family associations. What really matters is their incorporation and their mastery of high culture; I mean a literate codified culture which permits context-free communication. Their membership of such a community and their acceptability in it is a nation (Gellner 1996, 367-368).

Anthony Smith presents the other side in this debate on nationalism (Smith 2001, 5). He provides the main usages of the term "nationalism", among which are: 1) "a process of formation, or growth, of nations"; 2) "a sentiment or consciousness of belonging to the nation"; 3) "a language and symbolism of the nation"; 4) "a social and political movement

on behalf of the nation"; 5) "a doctrine and/or ideology of the nation, both general and particular. He recognizes that the formation of a nation is an ongoing process, which means that the content of the nationalism may change with the change of the political regime. Therefore, the term "nationalism" in the case of this article will be used as language and symbolism with a top-down approach, coming from the political elite, which is a subject to change. According to Smith, "the language or discourse of nationalism cannot be considered separately" from symbolism since they are both closely tied to the ideologies of nationalism. For him the distinctive language form of nationalism includes characteristics of the core ideology: "the symbolism of the nation has assumed a life of its own, one that is based on global comparisons and a drive for national salience and parity in a visual and semantic 'world of nations'" (Smith 2001, 8). Smith identifies three generic goals of nationalism: "national autonomy, national unity and national identity". Accordingly, he defines nationalism as "an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential "nation" (Smith 2001, 9). After all, as Smith argues, "nationalism is an ideology that places the nation at the center of its concerns and seeks to promote its well-being", that is why defining the concept of a nation first is of crucial importance for this text.

The way Smith sees the nation as pre-determined by the ethnic past, but at the same time built on a specific selection of this past, which is in accordance with the needs of the present and justifies modern positions, suggests that nationalism is a process which is really taking place in the present, whose boundaries lie in the past. This vision of nationalism is not too far away from the one of Miroslav Hroch. Hroch has worked mainly on nation-formation and national movements in Central and Eastern Europe, but his contribution to the theoretical clarification of the notion of nationalism is significant. He distinguishes national sentiment from the national movement, arguing that for a national movement to start there should be organized endeavors of the dominant ethnic community based on national sentiment to build the nation. I share his understanding of nationalism in this article, but would add the remark that sufficient leadership is needed not only for the initial creation of the nation, but also for its maintenance over time, as it is in the case with the European identity. Hroch identifies three chronological stages in the process of nation-creation and calls them phase A, phase B, and phase C.

In phase A, the foundation of the national identity is researched by activists, whose aim is to raise awareness, which leads to phase B and the patriotic agitation calling for awakening of the national consciousness. Only in phase C does this become a mass movement through which a full social structure could come into existence. These stages describe only the initial push of nationalism in the creation of the nation, but it is important to recognize the role of the so-called activists, who lead the process.

I would argue that once the nation is formed, the ones in power maintain the control of the nationalist discourse. Here come the complications of the term "nationalism", because with the fully-established social structure, the left-wing divide appears in the political sphere and nationalism splits into different kinds of nationalism – ethnic nationalism, liberal nationalism, socialist nationalism, ultranationalism (authoritarian), etc.

For further understanding of the notion of nationalism and that of neonationalism in particular, it is important to mention the work of John Breuilly, who argues that nationalism refers to "political movements seeking or exercising state power and justifying such actions

with nationalist arguments" (Breuilly 1985, 3). He sees nationalism as a form of politics, which takes the meaning of the term further than the one suggested by Miroslav Hroch, in which nationalism seems to complete its function with the creation of the nation-state. Breuilly explores the functions of nationalism in politics and provides three basic assumptions upon which the nationalist argument is used as a political doctrine: "(1) there exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character; (2) the interests and values of this nation take priority over all other interests and values; (3) the nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty" (Breuilly 1985, 3). He argues that the nationalist argument in politics is usually used by the opposition and could pursue secession or unity with another state according to the principle of self-determination. This argument holds true in the case of Europe today with the rise of anti-establishment movements and populist parties across the European countries. Benedict Anderson describes nationalism as the "awakening of nations to self-consciousness" (Anderson 1983, 5-7). His understanding on that matter is also highly relevant for the goals pursued in this article. He uses the term "sub-nationalism" for the nationalist movements within the borders of the so-called "old nations" and disagrees with the "long prophesied" "end of the era of nationalism", since the "nation-ness is [still] the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time" (Anderson 1983, 3). This is opposed to the ideas, proposed by globalism and scholars like Francis Fukuyama in "The End of History and the Last Man". Francis Fukuyama's book, published in 1992, arguing that with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world had reached the so-called "end of history", when the capitalist democratic model would spread around the world, is highly contested and criticized. Francis Fukuyama, who saw the "end of history" in the fall of the bipolar system of the Cold War, provided a very simplistic explanation of the word. Even though the nation-state system is being challenged from within and without, through the process of globalization, the nation-states are still the main actors in world politics. An opposite trend of reviving nationalism or the so-called neonationalism could be observed as an attempt to withstand the challenges of globalization.

In relation to this, Anderson identifies three paradoxes related to nationalism: "the objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists"; "the formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept (…) vs. the irremediable particularity of its concrete manifestations"; "the political power of nationalisms vs. their philosophical poverty and even incoherence" (Anderson 1983, 14-19). These contrasting pairs show the many faces nationalism can obtain and the explicit need for clarification of the term. My understanding of nationalism is linked to the national identity and is close to Alexander Wendt's definition of nationalism, which is "a sense of societal collective identity based on cultural, linguistic, or ethnic ties" (Wendt 1994, 384-396). Therefore, by nationalism or neonationalism in the case of this article, I refer to the process of reaffirmation of the nation and the source of legitimacy from the common ethnic past through selected events of national trauma and national glory, symbols, traditions, beliefs and cultural patterns to explain and justify present actions of the political elite. The clarification of the notion of nationalism is important with regard of the national identity and its transformation in Europe.

The concept of neonationalism or new nationalism is also linked to the rise of right-wing parties in Europe, anti-establishment movements, anti-globalism, protectionism, opposition to immigration and Euroscepticism.

Recent political developments in the European scene signal that the neonationalistic discourse is gaining more and more supporters. Mark Movsesian describes 2016 as the year, in which "nationalist resistance to global liberalism turned out to be the most influential force in Western politics" (Movsesian 2016, 1). Evidence for that is found in the Brexit vote in the UK, the Eurosceptic rhetoric of politicians such as Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson, Marine Le Pen in France, Viktor Orban in Hungary, Geert Wilders in The Netherlands and Norbert Hofer in Austria etc. The upcoming elections in the major European states and the real possibility of nationalistic parties winning the elections are giving vitality and hope to the neonationalist alternative of Europe. In this sense, Europe is not an isolated case, but part of a global trend that one might argue has officially been marked with the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the US. The clash between this new wave of nationalism and the forces of postnationalism is going to shape the debate of the future and the forms of collective identity and national belonging in Europe.

NEW FORMS OF NATIONAL BELONGING IN EUROPE

"Like all other postulated identities, 'humanity' as an identity embracing all other identities can ultimately rely solely on the dedication of its postulated adherents."
Zygmunt Bauman

National identity and liquid modernity

National identity is a type of collective identity, tightly linked with the collective memory and history of the nation as well as the organizational structure in which its boundaries exist such as the nation-state. In the case of Europe in the XXI century with the change of the organizational structure, the transfer of sovereignty from national to supranational European level and the various challenges of globalization, national identity is no longer a solid construct, but rather a liquid one (Bauman 2000) with blurred bounds, loose bonds, and diverse layers of belonging. In order to understand the transition in the way people develop their multi-layer collective identities in the XXI century in Europe, it is worth reviewing what national identity used to contain as a solid concept.

National identity is "the organization principle that nationally conscious individuals use to organize their history" as argued by Jan-Werner Müller (2002, 21). It "allows them to place events into a national narrative, which functions as a matrix of meaning" (Müller 2002, 21). As he states, collective identity and collective memory are mutually substitutive or in a "circular relationship". Hence, three points from the work of Jan-Werner Müller are significant for the purpose of this article. First, Müller makes an important distinction between collective or national memory and mass individual memory. He argues that national memory is qualitative, meaning that particularly selected events are memorized and forgotten, while individual memory is quantitative – it deals with facts and numbers.

Although national identity involves the individual choice to identify with the nation, the content of national identity is constructed with common efforts through a top-down approach. Therefore, the single individual does not choose what to include in the national narrative, but can only accept what has already been chosen from the collective memory of the nation to be glorified or grieved for.

The second point of Müller's argument is the relationship between memories and the present, which is of particular importance today more than at any time before. He argues that the institutionalization of collective memory provides the opportunity for memory to become the base of legitimacy of the present political power. This hides the risk of transforming the memory into a norm and treating it in absolute terms to justify certain foreign or domestic policy. The rise of absolute moral claims makes national identity non-negotiable, which is opposed to Jeffrey Olick, Thomas Berger and other scholars' vision that collective memory is always the result of continuous and ongoing intellectual and political negotiations (Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi and Levy 2011). National identity is not a solid bloc of meaning, given once and for all, but is constructed in the public discourse and is a subject of reinterpretation and change. The present defines the role of the past as argued by post-modernists.

Third point of Müller's contribution is concerned with the nexus power-memory, which is the center-point of his argument. He mentions the role of "high politics" in the use of collective memory for the construction of national identity. "High politics" is understood by him as "presidential speeches and other symbolic gestures by national representatives" (Müller 2002, 21). As also argued by Timothy Snyder, there is a political sovereignty over memory (Snyder 2002). Through "high politics" memory is included in a specific matrix of meaning, which can change with the change of the political regime or even with the change of just one political leader to another one. The role of political leaders in the reconfiguration of collective memory to serve a certain narrative of identification, or their claim to be responsible for the past in order to use it as an argument for present actions, is of particular interest for the transformation of national belonging in Europe. As Michael Ignatieff has pointed out, societies and nations are not like individuals, but their leaders can have an enormous impact on the mysterious process by which individuals come to terms with the painfulness of their societies' past (Ignatieff 2003).

The narrative of collective memory began with the work of Emile Durkheim (1912), although the term itself was coined later by his student Maurice Halbwachs (1952). Durkheim argues that to preserve the community united and coherent, some common experiences and continuity with the past are required. It stresses once again the importance of the past in the present narrative. In contrast with Müller, who separates individual memory from collective memory, Halbwachs (1992) places he individual memory in the context of social structures and institutions, which is another approach to the construction of collective memory. He claims that memory is constructed by the group and transmitted through the remembering of the individuals. Even though the group is an essential part of collective memory construction, it is not sufficient without the leadership of the elites, who guide the process. His argument develops in this direction by taking into consideration the reconstruction of the past according to the needs of the present by the leaders of the group.

Further development of the role of the present in defining the past comes from John Bodnar (1993), who argues that collective memory is selected according to the needs of the present and the needs of the anticipated future.

These temporal dimensions add an important aspect of the understanding of the versatility of collective memory in the national identity discourse. It also speaks for the fact that national identity construction needs direction from the top, somebody to guide the process with a vision of the anticipated future.

Another important aspect of the selectivity of collective memory is also collective forgetting. Pierre Nora (Nora 1996) calls it "collective amnesia", when certain events are deliberately chosen to be forgotten. This makes the collective memory invented and is in the same line of thoughts with Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" (Anderson 1983). Ernest Renan also considers the chosen forgetting. Moreover, he argues: "where national memories are concerned, grieves are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort." (Renan 1992, 10). This tendency may be observed throughout history in many nationalist projects of different countries and in the case of Europe as well.

With regard to European identity construction, Rodney Bruce Hall (1999) adds some relevant insights to the essence of collective identity and its formation. He presents in a historical perspective the link between individual identity, collective identity and the legitimating principle according to the source of sovereignty in the three periods that were distinguished at the beginning of this article, or, as he calls them "dynastic-sovereign", "territorial-sovereign" and "national-sovereign". Of particular interest to this article are collective identity and its legitimating principle in the nation-state system, which is claimed to be the "national self-determination" and what would come after it. He argues that institutions develop according to the legitimating principle and thus institutional collective action is justified through the collective identity. However, collective identity is in correlation with the events happening in the present as much as with the ones that happened in the past: "the collective identity is subject to change by forces and events that are both endogenous and exogenous to domestic society" (Hall 1999, 34).

Hence, the public authority should not only pursue its goals in the domestic and international arena, but also should react accordingly to the changes in the social order. This statement recognizes that national identity construction is not only a top-down process, but could also have a bottom-up effect for as long as the changes in society are taken into consideration by the authority and are addressed accordingly.

National identity as a solid concept is to be understood as the collective identification or sense of belonging to the nation, based on collective memory and closely related to the legitimating principle according to which it is constructed, interpreted, and enforced. The process of national identity building from the XIX and the XX century, as well as the struggle for identity of the XXI century could be approached though the lens of constructivism. "It's all relative", as Albert Einstein said.

To explain the lubricity of the contemporary world, in which frames and boundaries are no longer predictable, Zygmunt Bauman coined the term "liquid modernity". "Communities come in many colours and sizes, but if plotted on the Weberian axis stretching from 'light cloak' to 'iron cage', they all come remarkably close to the first pole." (Bauman 2000, 173). Nationalists often perceive Bauman as an enemy of the country, but in my view in his ideas about the flux stage of belonging in the world of the XXI century he is more critical toward it than not. The question of identity in the era of "liquid modernity" is a versatile one with the potential of transforming not only the course of the group to which one belongs, but the entire experience of being a human.

Europeans today face this very same question of identification with their nation or nations (in many cases), the nation-state that they were born in, the nation-state they grew up in, the nation-states of their parents, the nation-states in which they have lived or are living, Europe with all its faces and peculiarities, and possibly the entire human race. The new sense of belonging does not respect solid shapes, entire exclusion of the "other" and sometimes even question its very existence.

Constructivism and flexible belonging

Some might argue that nationalism is a form of constructivism since it relies on a specific perception of the world, shared by a group of people, i.e. the nation, and this perception is different for every nation. Benedict Anderson (1983) argues for the classification of nationality together with more open concepts such as kinship and religion than with more ideological ones such as liberalism or fascism. From one side, this allows for the notion of nationality (which is directly linked to national identity) to be interpreted according to perceptions of the group, attaching different meanings to it. But from the other side, it conceals the risk of turning the nationality into a vague and abstract concept, which could be problematic. However, the possibility of different variations in the content that national identity holds is undeniable.

The notion of nationality in Anderson's rhetoric is merged with all the cognate terms around the "nation". He contends that "nation, nationality, nationalism – all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyze", therefore one should not try to draw clear boundaries between them and analyze them separately from each other, but rather in their context of meaning. As Anderson indicates, "nationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that world's multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artifacts of a particular kind" (Guibernau and Rex 1997, 56). So to understand them we shall not address them out of context, but rather analyze them together.

A constructivist approach would allow us to explain the complexity of such abstract and multifunctional concepts as nationalism, nationality and the national identity. Paul James poses the question "how can the nation be experienced as a concrete, gut-felt relation to common souls and a shared landscape, and nevertheless be based upon abstract connections to largely unknown strangers and unvisited places?" (James 1996, XII). James designates the term "nation of strangers" and argues that the connectedness comes through abstracting mediations such as mass communications. Those abstracting mediations are of particular importance in relation to the challenges that globalization has imposed to national belonging.

In constructivist thinking may also be found Alexander Wendt, who worked on the issue of collective identity building. As he states, "the collective action problem dominates world politics" (Wendt 1994, 384-396), therefore collective identities matter and a proper approach toward their formation and manifestation are of crucial importance for understanding the perception of nations about themselves and others. Wendt explains the construction of state identity in the international system as coherently linked with the formation of the national identity of the nation-state. He distinguishes two types of identity – corporate and social – and argues that "corporate identity refers to the intrinsic, self-organizing qualities that constitute actor individually" (Wendt 1994, 384-396), according to which state individuality is open to negotiation.

On the other hand, social identities are seen as "sets of meanings that an actor attributes to itself while taking the perspective of others" (Wendt 1994, 384-396). In contrast with corporate identity, social identities have "both individual and social structural properties" (Wendt 1994, 384-396), which enable the actors to define themselves and their position in the social structure in the same time. The self-identification of a state in the international system is of crucial importance to the type of national identity that is proclaimed within this state and this particular link is essential for the case of Europe and the European Union.

Wendt acknowledges that this link is not externally given and "state identities and interests are in important part constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics" (Wendt 1994, 384-396). The way European leaders perceive Europe and the member states in the international arena is directly reflected in the domestic arena and vice versa. This speaks for the construction of identity in both directions – internationally and domestically – and brings the process closer to the theory of two-level games of Robert Putnam (1988). Identity construction is linked between the two levels and when the structure of the international system changes, for example, it requires internal adjustment, as is happening with the European Union. The perception of Wendt of the nation, national identity and nationalism and of constructivism in general is distant from the primordial view. He argues that "states are not structurally or exogenously given but constructed by historically contingent interactions" (Wendt 1994, 384-396). According to him, identification is a process or "a continuum from negative to positive – from conceiving the other as anathema to the self to conceiving it as an extension of the self" (Wendt 1994, 384-396). Thus, being a process it means that there are no fixed and solid identities, but that they change and transform over time. This brings us back to the main argument of the article.

Collective identities, regardless of their belonging to a nation or to a smaller or larger group, are constructed and imagined through an identity building process. The same way national identity was built in Europe regarding the nation-state, a new form of collective identity could emerge due to a structural change or other cause. The clash between postnationalism with the denial of the relevance of the nation and neonationalism with its further reaffirmation is creating a kind of hybrid collective identity in the Old Continent. Europeans have started living in some form of different dimensions in terms of their identity struggling with the constant need of proving their belonging. These new flexible belongings to diverse sentiments and selective identities have marked the way Europeans perceive themselves and the world in the XXI century.

CONCLUSION

Nations "are not eternal. They had a beginning and they will have an end. And they will probably be replaced by a European confederation" (Renan 1996, 41-55), argues the French historian Ernest Renan. In history, we can identify at least three fundamental changes in the process of collective self-identification that are lined with a change of the international system: (1) the belonging of sovereignty to God in the Middle ages (feudal era); (2) its transition to the King in the Renaissance (early-modern state); (3) and then the shift to the people after the French Revolution and the Enlightenment with the formation of the nation-state. The sovereign is tightly linked to the collective identity of the group, since sovereignty is the source of legitimacy of power and the ones in power choose the collective memory (what is to be remembered and glorified or grieved for and what is to be forgotten) of the group. As Jan-Werner Müller argues, collective memory and collective identity are mutually constitutive. What would be the next transition in the sovereignty that will change the collective identity of people in Europe? The so-called deepening of European integration, with more competences pulled up from the national level and handed to the European level, has the potential to become such a landmark in the group identification of people in Europe. But will it be a landmark?

Through this article, I hope to have contributed to the debate of postnationalism and neonationalism in the European Union. My understanding of the "nation" in the case of collective identity in Europe is closer to the postmodernist one in the way postmodernists see the role of the present in dealing with the past. However, I also agree with Anthony Smith that the use of the ethnic past is not unlimited and the nation has certain margins, beyond which it cannot expand. The view of Ernest Renan, that nations have a beginning and an end, is also very much relevant in the case of Europe, but it simplifies to a certain extent the intertwining of the national and the supranational level of belonging. Therefore, an important particularity of the nation is the organizational structure of the nation-state that makes its existence possible. What happens with nations when a new organizational structure is introduced is a very relevant question for Europe.

The sense of belonging to nation-states in Europe in the XXI century could be studied from several different points of view and the topic itself could trigger the curiosity for further analysis than the perspective provided here. But my goal is not to exhaust the complexity of the subject in its entirety, rather to elucidate a new vision of the substance of nationalism, or nation-ness, as it applies to the European case.

The revival of the collective identity of the nation has become a distinctive feature of European societies and politics in the beginning of the XXI century. Through this article I have examined what national identity and belonging to nation-states would mean in an avant-garde Europe, or what the avant-garde of national identity in Europe might be. Nationalities and simple belonging to nation-states are not sufficient for Europeans in the XXI century, but the idea of pan-European identity does not seem to be filling the gaps of national identity either. What will mark the new types of belonging in Europe is the clash between the two ideas of collective identity in regard to the nation: one, trying to eradicate it as an out-of-fashion concept – postnationalism, and the other, trying to revive it and give it a new meaning – neonationalism. Neither is sufficiently relevant to defeat the other, but in their co-existence lay the new forms of collective belonging in Europe in the XXI century.

Think about Giuseppe Bjorn, born in 1988 in Berlin to an Italian mother from Sicily and a Swedish father from Malmo, raised in the north of France, studying in England and Poland through an Erasmus exchange, currently living in Vienna, married to a Serbian girl. Where does he belong?

Now think about Giuseppe's grandfather – Marco Portelli – born and raised in Sicily, never leaving the island, marrying to a woman from Milano, having as neighbors on one side a Libyan family and a German-Lithuanian couple on the other, working in his coffee shop with tourists from everywhere in the world every day. Where does he belong? Both share the same temporal margins at least partially and a similar geographical region, but their axis of belonging is rotates different centers and at the same time around similar sentiments. These are the new forms of belonging in the XXI century. 

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