National Identity as an Ideological Construct

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ABSTRACT
Byrne Judith, Moiseeva Natalia Sergeevna, Sharov Konstantin Sergeevich. National identity as an Ideological Construct. In the paper, we demonstrate that different types of communities related to the base group identification (kins, tribes, clans, peoples, ethnic groups, nationalities, nations) may be constructed products of ideological actions of local elites. This may well explain why in the modern times national identification undergoes the serious crisis. The principles of grouping the human beings changed due to tremendously increased Earth population, and ideological narratives creating these social groups, changed as well. The ideological nature of national identification provides satisfactory explanation of the shift from ideologies addressed to the national communities, to ideologies created for ‘everyday citizens.’

Key words: nation, people, nationality, ethnic group, kin, tribe, clan, national identification, ‘everyday citizen’, ideological influence
ческая природа национальной идентификации предоставляет удовлетворительное объяснение сдвигов от идеологии, адресованных национальным сообществам, к идеологиям, предназначенному для «повседневных граждан».

Ключевые слова: нация, народ, народность, национальность, этнос, род, племя, клан, национальная идентификация, «повседневный гражданин», идеологическое воздействие

POSTMODERNIST STUDIES OF NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

MOST OF US ARE ACCUSTOMED TO AN IDEA that a nation, people, ethnic group are given to us as they are, in their primordial shape. Quite recently in sociological literature, one may have found a real shift in understanding the nature of nations (Moiseeva 2006; Sharov 2006). That school emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, was named the postmodernist approach to national identification (Balakrishnan 2012, 14; Breuilly 1993, 26, 35; Geertz 1973, 44).

Postmodernist analysis shewed the fragmentation and deconstruction of a number of national identities, occurring in modern times (Gellner 1964, 46; Gellner and Breuilly 2009, 52–55). Proponents of the postmodernist paradigm in understanding the nations, often argue that the national world is gradually demising, coming to naught, and talk about the advent of a new “post-national” order, where other types of communities (cultural, gender, religious, related to corporate business, hybrid, etc.) would replace the national identities. The elaboration of their methodology is mainly based upon analysing the appearance of a set of new post-Soviet nations in 1990s (Michnik and Matynia 1991) as well as emerging the new Asian nations (Upreti 2006).

Is the concept of nation young or ancient? Who used ideological instruments to construct nations? For what purposes? We are endeavouring to answer these questions in our work. In our mutual paper, we are trying to look at the concept of nation from a different viewpoint than it is commonly done. Much has been said, argued and debated on the nature of national identity, from the idea that it is given to us by God in its primordial form, to the view that it has an instrumental origin and dates back to the times not earlier than WWII. But our unusual angle of view on the national identification as a social process, consists in a suggestion that the nation is a social community of strictly ideological type. If we assume that, we may discern the same ideological fundamental traits in many social groups, from kins, clans and tribes to ethnic groups, peoples and nationalities.

Thus, William McNeil argues that nations and nationalism are phenomena that are mostly characteristic of a certain period of history, the era of modernism in the West (McNeil 1986, 22, 67). Since these phenomena were not known to the people of the earlier epochs, we will see the demise of nations and the withering of nationalism in the future. All postmodernist
thinkers agree with each other in outlining the time frame of the national era: from American Declaration of Independence (1776) to the end of the twentieth century, presumably, the Berlin Wall fall in 1991. Some researchers, e.g. Partha Chatterjee (1993), Homi Bhabha (2015), Nira Yuval-Davies (1997) chose postmodernist deconstruction to analyse the processes in national world picture, occurring after the end of the Second World War (see: Balakrishnan 2012). The others, e.g. A. Schlesinger (1969), R. Brubaker (1996), M. Billig (1995) focussed on the study of new horizons and dimensions of postmodernist national deconstruction. Although they are all distrustful and suspicious to the generalised theory of nationalism, they are nevertheless able to make some progress and success in understanding individual situations related exclusively to postmodernity trends, such as the transformation of many national communities into hybrid ones.

It is significant that even some modernists, such as Eric Hobsbawm, state that real national communities in recent decades have become some kind of quasi-national conglomerates at the utmost: “now... communities in the sociological sense of the word, are becoming increasingly difficult to detect in real life” (Hobsbawm 1994, 428). In the worst case, national groups are so deformed that sometimes they lose their main features, and such processes are legitimised by the desire of mankind for a new, “post-national” identification. “As soon as the national community disintegrates, an abstract identity is invented,” as Jock Yang (1999, 164) observes.

In 1983 two postmodernist books appeared simultaneously: the collection of articles The Invention of Tradition edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983), and Imagined Communities by Benedict Anderson (1983). The approach to the nation suggested by Anderson and Hobsbawm, is imagination and invention. For both researchers, nation and nationalism appear as cultural artefacts and sheer constructs that need to be deconstructed as fully as possible. We need reveal their form and content, understand the needs and interests of those social strata and elites who benefit from these narratives or directly use them for their own purposes. Hobsbawm insists that the reference to the historical past, which presupposes continuity, is largely artificial: “tradition (in this case, an invented tradition) is the wig, mantle, and other external attributes and ritualised practices surrounding the main activity of customs” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 2–3).

We may take for granted that postmodernist thinkers revealed political and constructivist nature of the modern nations. However, the types of group identification formed in the former times, such as ethnic groups or tribes, are mainly omitted in the postmodernist analysis, which is mentioned by Stuart Hall (1992). In our mutual paper, we are offering a bolder hypothesis than the well-known postmodernist researchers of national identification, mentioned above. We assume that all the types of group identification are of the ideological nature, from clans in the most ancient eras, to the modern national communities in our times.
CONSTRUCTING A NATION... CONSTRUCTING A PEOPLE

THE CONSTRUCTIVIST CRITICISM IS A STRONG POINT of the classical version of postmodernist approach to the national identification, but the constructivist way of reasoning is not so unquestionably provable and impeccable. On the one hand, postmodernists argue that we cannot and should not attribute any features of modern nations and nationalism to earlier, pre-modern communities and social moods, that is, we should not accept the “retrospective nationalism”, or presentism, because this will distort our understanding the fundamentally different forms of identities, communities and relationships that existed, e.g. in ancient world or the Middle Ages (Armstrong 1982, chap. 2). Along with the statement above, it turns out that ethnic communities characteristic of the pre-national period, cannot be considered as social structures created on the basis of certain interests and for certain purposes, and, therefore, are quite “natural”, “primordial” products of human identification. On the other hand, the followers of postmodernist approach to the national identification constantly claim that they do not accept such views on ethnicity, as primordialism (nations and peoples are created by God) or perennialism (nations and peoples are of perennial origin). Thus, it appears that classical postmodernists have some internal self-contradiction in their opinions. To name but one example, Krzysztof Jaskułowski (2010) believes that there are the direct connection between the type of nationalism (civic or ethnic) and the ideological regime (Western or Communist, Eastern). Such researchers seem to misplace the notions.

We are advancing a different approach, which can be called historical constructivism. It is really a postmodernist approach, and not just a verbal disguise and a way of historical “naturalisation” of national structures, which is rightly criticised by many scientists (e.g. Brubaker 1996, chap. 1; Dwyer and Crang 2002, 416–417; Grosfoguel 2004, 322; Penrose 2012). It is based primarily on postmodern deconstruction technique applied in order to reveal the ideological and political nature of peoples and nations. However, our approach, notwithstanding its postmodernist nature, takes into account the historical context of evolution of peoples, nationalities and nations. An essential difference between our concept and classical postmodernist approach to the national identification consists in a much broader interpretation of the concept of “nationalism”. Nationalism will be interpreted by us as a phenomenon unrelated to modernisation, and that can be found in most historical eras. This interpretation includes a wider view than just nationalism “in the name of the nation,” that seemed to emerge as recently as in the eighteenth century. Then many communities that existed in ancient times and belonged to the national ascription, e.g. disparate ethnic groups, centralised ethnic groups, peoples, can (and in our understanding, should) be thought of as ideological structures that have a quasi-historical foundation or do not have, “realistic” or “imagined,” but necessarily constructed by very few social architects from elites. The constructivist nature of peoples, ethnic groups and nationalities means that they did not exist primordially.

Not only the nations, but all the aforementioned communities have been ideologically
imagined, and this is one of the fundamental premises of our theory. To the question posed by the Indian political researcher Partha Chatterjee in the title of his work “Whose Imagined Community?” (Chatterjee 1993), we can give the only relevant answer: political, economic and religious elites who developed in the past and are presently developing the ideological programmes of aggregating the human beings. Though Manuel Castells (2009, 27–31), Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (1991, 74, 115, 130–133) believe that nations or ethnicities are historical cultural communities that are not “imagined” at all, and the term “imagination” can be only applied to a small number of nations artificially created by states and public governments, such as the Indonesian or Malay nations, we argue that by integrating with culture, nationalism becomes an ideological instrument based precisely on the imagination of its creators, supporters and followers. This imagination is rich and almost inexhaustible.

We regard all forms of the fundamental ascription, such as communities, clans, tribes, ethnic groups, and even peoples and nationalities, to be products of elites and completely artificially constructed communities. This bold assumption has escaped the attention of most researchers, although it is extremely logical and can explain many modern processes of deconstruction of nations. It may also convincingly explain the emergence of such surrogate concepts as “everyday citizens” introduced by Hillary Clinton (Sassin et al. 2018, 37 and further). For example, one of the classics of Western anthropology George Peter Murdock (1969, 70–72) notes in his Social Structure: most social groups related with each other by blood (tribal groups), are organic and natural in origin. Murdock writes that the main social narrative in these groups is based on the idea of the existence of blood ties between all members of the community. These connections may be real or mythical, close or distant, but they must be really present for a community to form (Ibid, 122–130). If an individual is not related to a community by blood ties, he will not be able to join it until he has passed the rite of “mixing the blood” that exists in the traditions of a great number of primitive peoples (Ibid, 80–81). At the same time, even marriage is considered as consummating the relationship that is based on the blood relationship. According to Murdock, the “mixing blood” initiation ceremony is a litmus paper test for determining whether a social group is an organic entity. But then, e.g. the gypsies, when considered in the Murdock’s terms, cannot be thought of as an ethnic group, even less so as a nation: even in the twenty-first century, the gypsies perceive themselves through the prism of blood kinship and their unity of origin. Nevertheless, the gypsies speak of themselves as “the eternal people.” In their national legends, there is a provision that once they were Indians, but at the exodus from the Indian subcontinent, their leaders told them: become a new people!

Many peoples of the ancient origin, such as the Jews, Persians, Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Macedonians, Romans, and some others were formed under the influence of ideological ethnocentrism, “pre-national” nationalism, and did not exist sui generis. Very often nationalists-ethnocentrists of these nationalities used artificial forming, “imagining” ethnic groups. In this regard, our position does not fundamentally coincide with postmodernist ethno-symbolism, whose supporters assert the primordial and natural existence of
pre-national communities. For instance, Suisheng Zhao (2004, 44, 81, 120), one of such ethno-symbolists, thinks that the Chinese nation is relatively modern and dates back just to the late nineteenth century. This researcher tries to split the concepts of very old Chinese people and modern Chinese nation, but hardly succeeds. He is arguing that the Chinese nation is, in fact, an ideological construct of the late Qing dynasty, while the nationality (people) that may be traced back to at least third millennium BC, is an organic community. But who may delineate them? Is not it more useful to suggest that the Chinese people was gradually coming into existence through millennia and centuries, but under the influence of ideological apparatus of kings, emperors and rulers, such as Qin Shi Huang?

There are many examples that many nationalities have already been invented or imagined by social elites and ruling circles. Some of the instructive examples are analysed by the modern American ethnologist Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, who anticipates the idea of historical constructivism to some extent. He argues that

> when ethnic groups are created, the transformation of religious and cultural beliefs into ‘laws’ or ‘norms’ of the social order, is carried out through the activities of the creators of social reconstruction projects, which are grouped into competing or co-operating elites. The activities of the latter are not limited to the sphere of power (Eisenstadt 1992, 207–208).

Similar ideas are expressed by the Russian ethnologist Svetlana Lourié (2004) in her *Historical Ethnology*.

Both pre-modern and modern elites interpret an ethnic group, a people as a self-sufficient reality, which plays the role of the subject of history and an independent agent of social action (Calhoun 1997, 25; Las Casas 2008, 52). But this is just one of the nationalist mythologies that does not reflect reality, masking the social construct under the “objective” social entity having the eternal origin. The mythologem is designed to create the conditions and prerequisites for uniting disparate groups of people into large communities. The invention of nationalities and ethnic groups by political, religious and economic elites was not uncommon even in the Ancient world. When the prophet Isaiah writes in his book, “Behold, the land of the Caldeans, this people was not till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwel in the wildernesse: they set vp the towers thereof, they raised vp the palaces thereof” (Is. 23:13), he speaks of the artificial creation of the Babylonian nation in the seventh century BC by the rulers of Assyria.

In the Middle Ages, New European period and modern times, this invention of ethnic groups has become a constant phenomenon, not an exception.

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1 Here and further the Biblical quotations are given by King James Bible of 1611.
INVENTED SOURCES OF ETNICAL IDENTITY

WITHIN THE LIMITS OF THE HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTIVISM described by us, it is pointless to recognise objectively existing roots of ethnicity / nationality and explicit links “ethnic group – nation,” which are mentioned in many modern nationalist programmes. In this regard, our concept also diverges from postmodernism. One of the most witty ethno-symbolists of modern times Anthony Smith (1998, 42) believes that any attempt to link nationalism with pre-national ethnocentrism necessarily leads to the idea of the nation as a modified ethnic community, “originating from an ancient social formation.”

Even if we assume that this is true for most of the “ancient” European nations, English, French and Dutch, it still remains unclear why the creation of, e.g. North or Latin American nations that do not have any pre-historical roots, certainly used clearly fictional ethnocentric mytho-symbolic anthologies that narrate about the main epochs in the history of the national community and remind of the uniqueness of the “ethnic” culture of the given community. Ethnic, not national. These nations did not have in the history of their ethnic group majestic figures who created a cohesive people, like King Arthur or Vercingetorix, since the ethnic groups themselves did not exist: American nation is, for instance, was regarded a “melting pot” of different European nations for a long time. Therefore, in the process of forming national communities of the New World, the role of such magnificent figures of the ancient times was inevitably played by the contemporaries of the constitutions. Why should Benjamin Franklin and Francisco de Miranda not be King Arthur and Vercingetorix of the New World? Ethno-symbolists usually overlook such facts from their consideration, and it remains unclear why modern nationalists, if they really did not have their direct ideological predecessors (ancient ethnocentric elites), involve the description of such semi-legendary personalities in their programmes.

Fig. 1. The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon. The picture of Sir Edward Burne-Jones. © Museo de Arte de Ponce, Ponce, Puerto Rico
In the wonderful novels of J. F. Cooper, the desire of nationalist intellectual elites to invent a non-existent ethnic past of the national culture is most clearly manifested in the American adventurous literature of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries. Natti Bumpo, the “Leather Stocking” represents the American “ethnic group” in the same way as Chingachgook represents the Mohican tribe.

Postmodernists are doomed to experience a lack of explanation force, when they come to the existence of complexes of memories, half-fictions associated with mythical migrations, captivity, liberation of peoples, the ebbs and flows of “national” history, manifestations of heroic “patriotism,” “Golden age” and the common fate of modern nations without an ethnic foundation (some of these nations are being in the state of their formation even in the twenty-first century) (cf. Jones 2008). These quasi-ethnic legends often play as important a role in the construction of modern nationalities (e.g. “Montenegrins,” modern Macedonians, “Eritreans” or “Solomonians”) as real memories from the ethnic past.

We are to regard ethnocentrism not as radically different from nationalism as postmodernists always consider (see: Smith 1991, 87).

For example, one of the most prominent nationalists of Latin America, the dictator of Paraguay Jose de Francia paid great attention to writing a clearly invented pre-national history of the Paraguayan nation with its saints and heroes, sovereigns and philosophers. That had an immediate goal of successfully and quickly creating a sense of national unity. De Francia distorted the real history of Paraguay beyond any sense and recognition, turning it into the history of his own imagined Paraguayan nation. The leaders of the Guarani tribe, under the mythological pen of this brilliant nationalist myth-maker, turned into ethnic kings, the friends of the “nation,” while the Spanish and Portuguese Jesuits into enemies of the aforesaid Paraguayan “nation” (cf. Bangert 1986).
FROM LOCAL BRAVE MEN TO THE POPULAR HEROES

There is another important consideration overlooked by most of modern researchers of national identification. This is the replacement of the national with the territorial with the subsequent nationalist smart inverting these concepts (Woods 2012). The American historian Daniel Boorstin (1966, 362) is compelled to note that “at least fifty years after the Declaration of Independence, the history of the United States looked artificial, secondary.”

Nationalists very often used or composed biographies of local heroes and brave men and passed them off as national heroes, because without national history it is hardly feasible to create effective nationalist programmes (one can analyse the works: Barbard 1965; Crevecouer 1792). The gradual transformation of the meaning of the heroic defence of Fort Alamo in San Antonio by the Texians in 1836, is very indicative.

Fig. 3. The Crockett’s Last Standing. The picture of the American painter Robert Jenkins Onderdonk (1852–1917). © Texas Governor’s Mansion, Austin, Texas, USA; Texas State Archive

After the annexation of Texas by the United States, the figures of Davy Crockett, Jim Bowie, William Travis, who led the defence of the Alamo mission, and General Sam Houston, who defeated Santa Anna, were portrayed in Washington as pillars of the American nation,
heroes who shed their blood for it (see, e.g.: Breisach 1995, 27; Chariton 1992, 75). A few years earlier, in the Republic of Texas, local Texian nationalists were portrayed only as heroes of the Texian nation. It should not be forgotten, however, that they fought, with the exception of Houston, not for the American nation or even for the nation of Texians, but for the federalism of the Mexican nation from the dictatorship of Santa Anna. During the thirteen-day siege of the Alamo mission, along with the Lone Star, the green-white-and-red Mexican flag flew over many houses, and about three-quarters of the Alamo defenders were native Mexicans. This did not prevent American nationalists from later portraying the Alamo brave men as martyrs in the name of the American nation. The legendary Davy Crockett was expelled from Kentucky in 1834 as an “enemy of the American nation,” but after fifteen years was posthumously solemnly accepted as one of the most renowned “heroes of the nation” (Chariton 1992, 75; Shackford 1956, 102). The interpretation of real history by national architects sometimes may be surprisingly contradictory!

In every American state (especially in the southern states) in the first half of the nineteenth century, the profession of historian became one of the most popular and socially respected professions after the lawyer and the military. Numerous “historians” created “historical” societies whose task was to study the history of the nation in a way of “from Avalon to the current President.” However, the attempts of these local historical societies only led to the fact that these societies promoted and glorified the history, life, manners, and social achievements of their state in their bulletins, but not the American nation. When trying to set the image of a state up for the image of the American nation, there was a serious conflict of interests of the states. The pseudo-nationalism of one state came in conflict with the same, not the best pseudo-nationalism, or rather with the national hoax,
of another. This produced anything but the strengthening of true national unity, as Samuel Huntington (2005, 185–190) mentions. National myths, proliferating and multiplying in the corners of each state, by 1860 created only the appearance of the unified American national history, while in fact they only led the nation to the Civil war. Gone with the Wind and Jezebel are excellent cinematic examples of this.

These are just a few of the many examples of how nationalism could continue the history of a nation back into the centuries or put it together from regional pieces like a puzzle, creating ethnic and national myths and, therefore, a sense of continuity between an ancient people and a modern nation.

If we consider the process of constructing the nations and ethnic groups in more details, we shall find that sometimes, although infrequently, not only the imaginary continuity of “ethnic group – nation” was used by elites in the creation of modern national communities, but also many other types of continuity, e.g. “nationality – ethnic group,” “tribe (kin) – nationality,” “family – kin,” “clan – ethnic group,” etc. The use of such pairs in the ideologies of national identification was used much more widely in pre-modern times. It was the case for the formation of ethnic groups, peoples, nationalities, and that suggests the constructivist character of pre-national communities. Thus, it turns out that nationalism, being represented by the efforts of the elites as an eternal and unchanging process of “awakening, embodiment and action of the people’s spirit,” actually proves to be really “eternal” to some extent, although this word should be used with great care, not always and in a well-defined conventional meaning. The nationalism is eternal as much as ethnic communities and peoples are eternal.

For the most part, our historical constructivist concept is based on the statement about the non-modern nature of the ideological construction of social groups. In this sense, a people is as much a constructed entity as a race, tribe, or community. To get rid of all doubts as for the race, we suggest that the Biblical example of Noah’s sons who gave rise to the three races,1 and Cain who founded the fourth (Goheen 2011, 38, 40–41), may be instructive.

**IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCTING A COMMUNITY**

IN THE HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH to the ideological construction of peoples, it is easy to shew that the national ideologies are not static, frozen structures themselves, but dynamic and constantly developing. The “development” of national consciousness is a quasi-evolutionary process of successive renewal of stages. This is not development, but forming. There is nothing of real evolution in the Darwin’s sense of the word (mutation and selection), and this quasi-evolution is not a change of periods of ideologies (“natural selection”), but rather the addition of existing structures with new

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1 Gen. 9:18–29.
elements to the old ones, in which all the components of the system begin to function smoothly together.

The concept of historical constructivism elaborated by us, manifests its historicism not only in considering ethnic and national communities from a great historical perspective, but also extends its logic up to the present day, eliminating postmodern assurances of the bygone end of the era of national world (taken place shortly after 1945) (McNeill 1986, 28). Nationalism, understood not simply as a consequence of modernisation and transition to the modern order of things (as it is understood by most postmodernists), but as a phenomenon that reflects the constant urgent need of a society in the presence of an ordered and delineated structure, proves its indestructibility and hints at a possible non-extinction in the future. With the altering directions of modernisation that accompany modern societies after the industrial revolution, nationalism is likely to still exist, defending the principles of the great national ideological narrative. The formation of new states during the last five years persuasively proves it. It is somewhat in line with Anthony Smith’s statement that so far we have not been able to find a serious competitor to the nation in terms of the emotional attachment and devotion of the majority of people (Smith 1995, chap. 1).

This historical constructivist view of nationalism, in fact, does not contradict the definition of nationalism proposed just above, as it may seem at first glance. Nationalist ideological programmes are really aimed at the imagination of peoples and nations, but not always directly, and sometimes indirectly. There are many nations that were constructed by elites “from scratch,” where there were no pre-national communities that would have coincided with the nations themselves, and this is an example of the “direct” creation of nations. The Montenegrins (2006) – the Serbs, the Eritreans (1993) – the Ethiopians, the Solomonians (2018) – the Papuans, the Hong Kongers (?) – Chinese. All these nations are fictional. There is no such thing as Montenegrins, Eritreans, Solomonians or Hong Kongers in the ethnic sense. The concept of fictitious nation was used in all the four cases for achievement of the definite political tasks, but the nationalist ideologies were made use of in all the situations.

We can also find no fewer social communities that in their historical development in pre-national epochs have passed some or all stages of pre-national ethnic development, and this is an example of indirect formation of national identities, in which earlier cultural stages were included by nationalist elites. Nations are not products of the modernisation of ethnic groups, and the history of the development and functioning of nationalism is not a straight line, but a series of many bumps and jumps. We may regard nations as new constructs or ancient ones. Nations may be as modern forms of “identification” as the constructs of the past: kins, clans, tribes, ethnic groups, nationalities. We just change the perspective. The

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1 The process currently taking place in Hong Kong, appears to be more complex anyhow. They need a detailed consideration that is obviously beyond the limits of the paper. The paper of Doctors Kit and Him (2018) may serve a good starting point for the future deliberation.
ancient people of Chinese may be called the Chinese nation as well. The Jews can be regarded both as nation and people. Fictitious nations such as the Montenegrins or Solomonians may be viewed as nations, since in the ethnic sense they are the Serbs and Papuans. But in both cases, the social groups in question represent ideological constructs. The Chinese, Jews, Serbs and Papuans were created in the former historical epochs, while the Montenegrins or Solomonians just of late.

Elites create, but later embody both a people and nation. Many myths of national identification arise from their activities (Donskikh 2012, 6). Ethnocentric elites, of course, did not use merely the ideological apparatus of managing social consciousness and social transformations for their purposes. At their disposal, there were historical, religious and cultural traditions, legends, memories, an inexhaustible source of construction material for the formation of the nation (Barth 1969, 71, 75–78). Where these legends did not exist, they were invented artificially.

No national community (whether it has ethnic roots in history or not) has escaped the writing of its pre-history by modern nationalists, in which its representatives were presented and even imposed on the narrative of the successive transformation of forms of fundamental ascription from the oldest communities (families, clans, tribes) to quite modern national groups. This process is almost always pictured in Darwinian colours. A typical example is modern Ukraine, where since 2015–2016 a myth has spread about the ancient people, the Ukrs. If even one of the most “realistic” and persistent nationalisms, the American one, presents the history of the American nation as a transformation: from the families of colonists to feelings of ethnic solidarity... from them to the national idea generated by the Revolution... and to a single nation formed by a Civil war” (Ahlstrom 2004, 366), this makes us believe that any ideological programme of national identification cannot be free from such an interpretation of history. There is no such thing as national identification in the sense of a truly democratic process. Homo sapiens are compelled to identify themselves with a certain people or nation by the elites, and the territorial factor frequently becomes the main factor of national identification (cf. Grosby 1995, 150, 153). Arabs in France, Germany and Sweden are gradually receiving the EU ID cards and passports, and become the French, German and Swedes. The architects of such state of things, are EU political bureaucrats.

We tend to think that such mythological a logic of elites cannot be different, because the basis of nationalism (and hence the ideological programmes of national identification, that prescribe us how to identify ourselves) has a mythological basis. The elites cannot help creating such pre-histories of a nation. Nationalism without ethnic pre-history is not nationalism at all, but an internally inconsistent and ineffective social artefact. This can be explained by the fact that a nation without its ethnic pre-history, which revives and sanctifies in social and individual memories the great events of the past, wars and defeats, images of heroes and traitors, is conceived as something frivolous and clearly artificial. Such a nation becomes a target of hostile nationalisms. Nations must have a pre-modern history, even if they don’t. Therefore, if a nation has its ethnic past, modern nationalists take it as
a basis and deform it; if not, they compose it. In this sense, the modern Ukrainian nationalist myth of the ancient “Ukrs” is not technically very different from the poorly and infamously known myth of the Aryans.

Can we anticipate that the reaction of the masses is that important for the elites who produce the peoples and form the nations? Whether a tribal community is separated from a relatively modern nation by millennia or a few years, what matters it? The same logic has been common to all ethnocentric constructivist movements and ideologies, whatever names postmodernist thinkers may give them. Not only the efforts of Elizabeth I and Cardinal Richelieu, but also the actions of Pepin the Short and the first English King Æthelstan are not so from the actions of modern nationalists. All of them united people who spoke different languages and lived upon vast territories, people unrelated to each other. If the social narratives of the elites (both modern and pre-modern) do not find a response in the hearts and minds of the masses, it is unlikely that these masses shall follow the elites. That is why the ideology is so important here. In order to mobilise most of the representatives of an ethnic group (nation) to creating a new social structure, throughout the history of nationalisms, the elites used historical memory of the communities they were trying to unify. They were finding and creating the symbols and myths of this historical memory. And the presence of such a memory provided the success of their ideological programmes of national identification.

**RACHEL AND HER IDOLS UNDER THE CAMEL SADDLE**

_Historical experience demonstrates that a nation, people, ethnic group are structures that were formed not just since the epoch of revolutions of the eighteenth century, as most of postmodernist thinkers argue, but since the deepest antiquity. As long as there is humanity, there is also an ideological formation of social groups, including nationalities and peoples.

It is proper to regard the existence of pre-national identities as the ideological constructs. They are not results of spontaneous national or ethnic identification, provided by the fact of birth or citizenship (community of blood and soil). National culture is no exception, and if it is not reliably protected by its nationalism from negative external and internal factors, it will face the fate of being absorbed by a stronger culture that has entered into a combat with it, or being erased from the memory of humans due to the internal contradictions of its nationalist programme. For this reason, protective nationalism is often manifested in the form of political doctrines and ideologies.

Having accepted the provision that nationalities are the products of the ideological activity of people, their creators, it is not difficult to find the first example in human history of such an ideological creation of a people.
The Biblical Book of Genesis tells us a strange story about Rachel, the daughter of Laban, and some idols that she stole from her father when she ran away from her father’s house with her husband Jacob: “and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father’s” (Gen. 31:19).

Among theologians, this point still continues to cause great controversy (Kominsky 2018). Some believe that by stealing the household deities, the pious Rachel wanted to save her father from the sin of idolatry. Others see this as evidence of her possible claims to the future inheritance of Laban: the presentation of idols-deities (“teraphims”) in court could serve as a proof of civil, including property, rights (in the case of Rachel, the rights of her husband Jacob to the inheritance of her father).

Whatever it may be, this curious and obscure story about Rachel hiding the stone gods from her angry father under a camel’s saddle, and referring to her menstruations, seemed to lead to the first ideological construction of the peoples: the Jewish and Aramaic:

34Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camels furniture, and sate vpon them: and Laban searched all the tent, but found them not. 35And shee said to her father, Let it not displease my lord, that I cannot rise vp before thee; for the custome of women is vpon mee: and he searched, but found not the images (Gen. 31:34–35).

When Jacob heard the God’s words that he would be Israel, the father of the great people, he hardly knew the Rachel’s role in the creation of this people.
The grandsons and granddaughters were not half so important to Laban as his house idols, teraphims: “And now, though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father’s house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?” (Gen. 31:30) Jacob does not turn out to scorn the idols too, and he recognises Laban’s property right: “With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee. For Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.” (Gen. 31:32).

As we remember from the Biblical description, after his unsuccessful quest for his gods, Laban, fearing that one morning Jacob and Rachel would come to him with the idols in question, and therefore with material court litigation, made a hill of pebbles in Iegar-Sahadutha (Galeed, Gilead) (Gen. 31:47), drawing the border between the two future peoples: Jacob went across the river, and Israel appeared, and Laban remained on the other side, and Aram appeared. Thus Laban pointed to Jacob: “neither will I pass over this hill to thee, nor will thou pass over this hill to me.” That is, no Jew would be able to prove anything in an Aramaic court, and vice versa.

Rachel greedy for inheritance and not abhorrent of the idols, Jacob and Laban, who were engaged in the bitter division of their property, created a political precedent by their actions. Nations can appear not as a result of exalted speeches, but as a result of intra-familial material disputes and struggle.
The pieces of stone under the camel’s saddle, much more than the piety of Abraham, were the causes of the appearance of the two peoples: one with more than two thousand years of history (the Aramaic), and the other with at least five thousand years of history heretofore (the Jews). This may be an instructive and striking example of the fact that it was the elites who artificially created peoples throughout the history of human society, including its most ancient stage.

The idea that the nations and peoples were constructed by their elites, and did not arise as a result of the spontaneous awakening of mass consciousness of humans who suddenly felt a common nature with each other, allows us to convincingly explain many processes of the current crisis of nations. The ideological construction of nations, peoples and ethnic groups that seems to have been taking place ever, is now in a state of uncertainty. In the twenty-first century, the population rate on the planet Earth has changed radically in comparison with the beginning of the twentieth century. The ideological programmes of forming the peoples and nations were not adapted to the new changed circumstances. Dr Wolfgang Sassin emphasises that for the eight billion people living together to comprehend the new state of affairs, they have to adhere to the new level of complexity of thinking:

Eine zweite Aufklärung scheint überfällig angesichts einer für knapp 8 Milliarden Individuen nicht mehr zu erfassenden Komplexität ihrer global vernetzten künstlichen Lebensgrundlagen und ebenso kritisch, der kaum noch überschaubaren technischen Machtmittel in den Händen einiger weniger „Repräsentanten“ dieser 8 Milliarden

[A second enlightenment seems overdue in view of the complexity of the globally interlinked artificial bases of life of nearly 8 billion individuals, who can no longer grasp this complexity, and equally critical, in view of the hardly controllable technical means of power in the hands of a few “representatives” of these 8 billion.]

1 See Dr Sassin’s contribution to this issue of The Beacon: Sassin, Wolfgang. 2018. “Zu den Grenzen
The idea of national world allowed people to co-exist well when there was one billion people in the world. However, when there are eight billion people at the present time, different hybrid forms of social grouping begin to take over territories that once belonged to peoples and nations (cf. Millán 2006). We can assess the strength and extent of the national picture of the world being in the state of deepest crisis, recollecting that Hillary Clinton in her presidency campaign public speeches in 2015–2016, abandoned the very idea of the American nation (Sassin et al. 2018, 37). Instead of an ordinary American, Clinton began to address to an “everyday citizen.” America, ideologically portrayed for 240 years as a “melting pot” of various nationalities fusing into a new American people, in the democratic leader Clinton’s mind, has ceased to be a unifying factor for the 350 million humans living on the North American continent between Canada and Mexico!

The programmes of modern nationalists look complex and involving nontrivial political manifestations, while the ideological narratives of ancient ethno-centrists and architects of peoples and old nationalities, often Biblical figures such as Jacob, Rachel and Laban, Shem, Ham, Japheth, were very simple and addressing merely the basic necessities of human beings: the security of home, absence of starvation, lack of wars and armed conflicts, provision for the mutual survival. However, despite the “obvious” unlikeness, the nationalist political, economic and religious foundations are based precisely on the same trivial principles as the ancient architects were guided by. And this disguised adherence to the basic necessities and wishes of human existence, the consistent intent to form the collective WE of the individuals having their own goals and world outlooks, generally provided the utmost success of nationalist ideological programmes of the eighteenth–twenty first centuries. We think Dr Sassin describes the idea in a sober and judicious way:

Dass nur einfache „Geschichten“ menschliche Gemeinschaften, angefangen von Zweierbeziehungen über Familien und Clans bis hin zu ganzen „Völkern“ zu jenen speziellen WIRs verbinden können, die dann gemeinsam und einheitlich handeln, es erklärt sich aus den höchst unterschiedlichen Wirklichkeiten, die soziale Wesen je für sich erfassen. Nur einfache Geschichten, Stereotype, seien es Menschen- oder Weltbilder, lassen sich teilen. Um höchst unterschiedliche Individuen deshalb für alternative Versionen von WIRs zu gewinnen und sie kollektiv „führen zu können“, bedarf es in der Regel „einfacher Herausforderungen“. Das sind in der Regel zu kommunizierende Zustände wie Hunger, Hilflosigkeit als die Unfähigkeit sich ohne die Hilfe anderer „zurechtzufinden“, materiell und mental. Es sind Zustände die mit Geburt und Tod, mit Krankheit und mit Ereignissen, bzw. Umständen verbunden werden können, die Vertrauen zwischen Individuen erfordern.

[That only simple “stories” associate human communities – beginning from two-way relationships over families and clans up to whole “peoples” – to those special WEs, which then act jointly and uniformly, is an undeniable necessity resulting from the most different images of reality, which social beings „paint“ each for themselves. Only “simple stories,”
stereotypes, be it images of man or images of the world, can be shared. Therefore, in order to win rather dissimilar individuals for alternative concepts of WEs and to be able to “lead” them collectively, “simple challenges” are needed. Only basic human conditions such as hunger, helplessness as the inability to “find one’s way” without the help of others, both in a material and a mental sense, can easily be communicated between “individuals.” These are conditions that can be associated with birth and death, with illness and with events or circumstances that require basic trust between individuals.]\(^1\)

Are we already witnessing the destruction of national picture of the world, e.g. in social media communities? In any case, the situation of nation-states and states-nations, described in 1969 by Mostafa Rejai and Cynthia Enloe (1969), is coming to its end. The concept of nation is ceasing to exist for network humans who live tens of thousands miles away from each other and communicate in real time in social networks and messengers in an eye-blink. The products of such networked cultures are the cosmopolitans who have no idea of their national identity; and this idea is getting so strong that it is a real danger of a forthcoming advent of the new most common type of group identification on the planet Earth, the network one. Homo sapiens of this new type can be aggregated and compressed with a greater efficiency in a new billion reality, the reality of a new human aggregate state.\(^2\) And no wonder, these homo sapiens shall inevitably transform into homo billionis,\(^3\) a new no-national, no-ethnic aggregate state of humanity we are destined to see ere long.

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\(^1\) Ibid. P. 11.

\(^2\) The idea was first expressed by Dr-Ing Wolfgang Sassin in a private correspondence with one of the authors of the paper. To be sure, it is a promising starting point for a further comprehensive analysis to be done.

\(^3\) We appreciate Dr Sassin for the term he coined to denote a new stage of human evolution.
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**EXTENDED SUMMARY**

**BYRNE, JUDITH; MOISEEVA, NATALIA S.; AND KONSTANTIN S. SHAROV. NATIONAL IDENTITY AS AN IDEOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT.**

In the paper, a historical constructivism concept is elaborated on the basis of Wolfgang Sassin’s theory of WE formation. The basic provisions of our concept of historical constructivism are the following: 1. The nations are social constructs. 2. Not only the nations, but also kins, clans, tribes, ethnic communities, nationalities, peoples are products of ideological unifying the human beings. All the types of group identification are of the ideological nature, from clans in the most ancient eras, to the modern national communities in our times. 3. The architects of aforementioned social groups are political, economic and religious elites. 4. Nationalism is an ideological apparatus. 5. Nationalism is a phenomenon unrelated to modernisation. It can be found in most historical eras. This interpretation includes a wider view than just nationalism “in the name of the nation,” that seemed to emerge as recently as in the eighteenth century. 6. The communities that existed in ancient times and belonged to the national ascription, e.g. disparate ethnic groups, centralised ethnic groups, peoples, can (and in our understanding, should) be thought of as ideological products that have a quasi-historical foundation or do not have, “realistic” or “imagined,” but necessarily constructed by very few social architects from elites. 7. The constructivist nature of peoples, ethnic groups and nationalities means that they did not exist primordially. Many peoples of the ancient origin, such as the Jews, Persians, Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Macedonians, Romans, and some others were formed under the influence of ideological ethnocentrism, “pre-national” nationalism, and did not exist from the beginning of human society.

Sometimes not only the imaginary continuity of “ethnic group – nation” was used by the elites in the creation of modern national communities, but also many other types of continuity, e.g. “nationality – ethnic group,” “tribe (kin) – nationality,” “family – kin,” “clan – ethnic group,” etc. The use of such pairs in the ideologies of national identification was used much more widely in pre-modern times. It was the case for the formation of ethnic groups, peoples, nationalities, and that suggests the constructivist character of pre-national communities.

Historical constructivist theory enables us to explain modern processes of loosening the national picture of the world. It may also convincingly explain the emergence of such surrogate concepts as “everyday citizens” introduced by Hillary Clinton. Instead of an
ordinary American, Mrs Clinton began to address to an “everyday citizen.” In the twenty-first century, the population rate on the planet Earth has changed radically in comparison with the beginning of the twentieth century. The ideological programmes of forming the peoples and nations were not adapted to the changed circumstances. The idea of national world allowed people to co-exist well when there was one billion people in the world. However, when there are eight billion people at the present time, different hybrid forms of social grouping begin to take over territories that once belonged to peoples and nations.

The status quo of national states fixed after WWII is coming to an end. The concept of nation is ceasing to exist for network human beings who live tens of thousands miles away from each other and communicate in real time in social networks and messengers, i.e. with the rate of an eye-blink. The products of such networked cultures are the cosmopolitan social groups whose representatives may have no idea of their national identity at all.

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