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## Nation: a Mere Modern Reality?

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### Abstract

*The word nation has always presented several difficulties of definition. It has been a puzzle for many who, in their keenness to provide a concrete, short definition, have fallen into the error of disregarding the complexity of the term. However, such an urgent need for clarification is justified by the fact of its imminent reality and, what is more, its abrupt intrusion in modern man's life and identity. Several writers have identified community and cultural and linguistic commonality as the main traits of a nation; notwithstanding, as Gellner explained, will and culture would be insufficient factors to construct a theory of nationality. On the other hand, some scholars look at nation as a mere modern invention. From Roberts' perspective, "this movement arose in contrast to published works from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that advocated ideas that nations had always existed throughout history and perhaps even existed in an unbroken chain from time immemorial to the present" (11). Therefore, the modernist assumption on the origin of nations truly confines the extent and development of this term throughout History. This is why, the objective of the present work would be, first, to support the idea of its long-ago existence in human History through the presentation and analysis of the three methods of nation forming proposed by John Fiske; and, second, to suggest and sustain a new definition of the term based on some of the primordialist assumptions of Azar Gat and Anthony Smith in an attempt to embrace nation's complexity, extent and antiquity.*

**Keywords:** Nation, Modern Reality, Law, Culture, Philosophy.

## INTRODUCTION

### **John Fiske and his Controversial Theory**

John Fiske was born in 1820 in Hartford, Connecticut. Although he graduated from Harvard in Law, Fiske never practiced as a lawyer. Even though he was interested in various fields like Biology and Philosophy, the largest part of his life was dedicated to the study of History. His successful career as a writer properly started in 1861, and he eagerly continued writing until his mature age. Most of his published works in common are about American and English history.

In his influential book, *The Beginnings of New England* (1889), this author states an uncommon theory about nation-building in which he identifies it as a historical process that dates from the early beginnings of human civilization. To sustain his argument, Fiske uniquely identifies three types of nation forming methods which subsequently depict the preferred manners of civil governance in the three main epochs of History: antiquity, the middle ages, and the modern age.

Fiske's theory has been harshly criticized as the study of nations and nationalism has been often restricted to the critical observation of modern nations that emerged after the French Revolution. The reason behind this tendency is that the predominant academic discourse argues that nations are a modern invention since they became nations thanks to advanced technology, mass printing, and a high level of literacy. Nevertheless, interestingly proposed, Roberts argues that such modernist theories on nation may have arisen as an endeavor to strike down the Nazi's nationalistic propaganda that caused so much destruction and was a critical element that drove the Second World War. Moreover, as this author accurately states, "Nations are human communities with common cultural features, languages, myths, ancestral homelands and the legal rights of a state; modern technology is unrequired for a nation to exist" (abstract).

Although it is clear that the exact term nation-state is a modern invention, Smith declares that "modernist arguments are only accurate in that most modern nations are chronologically recent creations. However, he claims modernists are generally misled and models of nations can be found in earlier epochs," (*Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, 24); a fact that destabilizes modernists theoretical basis and framework.

In reality, the essence of what a nation is has existed in different nuances and shapes from the commencement of civilizations. For instance, the meaning of the term *civilization* denotes itself the presence of some of the most relevant characteristics of what nowadays is named as a nation. This concept, that is clearly related to ancient times, is commonly described as “an advanced state of human society, in which a high level of culture, science, industry, and the government has been reached or a highly developed culture, including its social organization, government, laws, and arts; or the culture of a social group or country at a particular time” (Civilization).

On the other hand, as mentioned above, if the historical study of the nation is artificially constricted to modern times, it admittedly limits the research of peoples and states of prior times that undeniably possess numerous traits of our contemporary nation-states. Although it is crucial to clarify that not all ancient and medieval states can be considered as nations, in some instances, as Roberts fairly declares, “some states develop into nations, especially if internal populations have hybridized cultures and histories to the point that they now have a new common culture and myth history” (22).

To wisely avoid the unfortunate omission of historical ‘national features’, Fiske’s theory on nations will be hereafter presented and extended in two grand stages: A comprehensive introduction to the promising beginning of human organized societies and a brief commentary on the three nation-building methods.

### **The Early Human Society**

Political systems are relatively similar to organic life forms in that their process of development and extinction is so slow or so abrupt that it can be rarely precisely determined by dates. The reason behind this asseveration is that political systems not merely represent historical facts but they are more a depiction of trends of thought, human feelings and their actions towards the conditions and environment where they life. In such terms, one could not expect to give complete results on the matter due to its vastness and complexity.

Nonetheless, an exhaustive analysis of various concepts and historical facts, as well as some introspection on more subjective sources like culture and religion, may grant the researcher some keys to, first, grasp the antiquity of the nation forming process which has been used since prehistoric times until now; and second, identify the

way this process has transformed itself through history due to the different experiences and achievements humans have acquired in their relation to their surrounding and neighbors.

While looking back at humane societies in primitive times, one may imagine a desolated, inadequate land where savages tried to endure the tempestuous conditions of the time: fierce beasts, inevitable disasters and tribal confrontations that threatened their existence. However, it might be also imaginable the monotony and narrowing of their daily life, keeping alive almost how animals do; collecting sylvan fruits, hunting, reproducing and dying.

Thus, the theme of the history of politics, in a broad sense, is the description of the process of how these primitive tribes united in favorable conditions to form powerful nations that had high standards of formality and manners and a sustained life and well-being that allowed the flourishing of art and science; knowledge that limited the size of wars and enabled people enjoy periodic or sporadic intervals of peace.

## **NATION-BUILDING METHODS**

Looking at all the variety of ethnic groups that managed to become powerful and stable nations, one can see, as Fiske explains, three different methods used on various occasions that produced different results. Although the merging of minor groups into larger groups has generally been accomplished through violence, the three forms of nation-building are highly contrasting.

### *The Oriental Method*

This ancient process of nation-building could be described as the method of *conquest without incorporation*. This practice occurred when a tribal group grew into a national dimension and conquered and absorbed neighboring groups without allowing them to take part in their politics. Presumably, it is not by force that these groups first joined the one that predominated. Preferably, alliances and agreements could often take place at the beginning of the process, when favorable aspects or shared interests were perceived between them. However, this grace period may have been short-lived, but long enough to allow some smaller groups that agreed on a shared language and habits become a larger one that oppressed their neighbors.

This type of incorporation presented several challenges in terms of communication due to the difference in language and culture. That is why the conquering tribe ended up somehow "exiling" these annexed groups through their slavery and their self-proclamation as the high-end caste who had the right to dominate them and benefit from their hard work to build their empire. This kind of ambition is called by some scholars as "the Eastern lust".

Although this method may not be laudably recognized in our times, it is a method whose effectiveness has made it last until these days in some areas of the Earth in the form of dictatorships, fascism, and tyrannies. In any case, certainly, this type might be considered much better than the earlier human state of savagery. However, the oriental method does not keep up the strength of before, as men continued evolving in their ideals of nation and their aspirations for freedom and equality aspirations have grown higher.

### *The Roman Method*

As a secondary stage of development, this method could be defined as a way to *conquest with incorporation but without representation*. The secret of the success of the Roman Empire was that, for the first time, many groups were integrated into the political body without enslaving most of them. As Fiske declares, freedom had previously existed in the barbarian tribes or the Greek citadels; there had been a union in the despotism of Assyria and Persia; but then, for the first time, freedom and union were granted to work together, resulting in an extensive and lasting empire. The entire Mediterranean world was under one government. Language, culture and religion barriers were defeated in all directions. From the Alps, to the north of England; from Viscaya bay to the Carpathian Mountains; they all became Roman citizens, sharing the same Roman laws and enjoying the same material and spiritual benefits of that civilization.

Moreover, the loyalty of Roman citizens and allies to the Empire proved to be a form of 'nationalism' that granted them success in global wars and their access to reserved resources. A proof of such 'nationalistic' sentiment was, in Roberts' words, that "Roman citizens and allies exhibited their national affiliation in a variety of ways, most notably via a willingness to die for the Roman national collective in the face of extreme duress during the Second Punic War." (Abstract).

However, this method had many flaws, as, first, it took a long time to produce its best results and, second, it failed to weaken people's spirit of independence and their desire for self-control and a local government. On top of that, in its desperate and abrupt drive for expansion, this empire continued encouraging the expansion of functions of the nuclear state gradually sacrificing freedom for the sake of union. This union was slowly destroyed due to increased internal and external conflicts between the parties and pressure to keep the empire on top of the world.

As Fiske suggests, the most acute problem faced by the ancient Roman civilization was its ignorance of the principle of *representation*. There were no representative assemblies. Its senate was made up of a rich and noble aristocracy, while the popular assemblies were merely "town meetings". The notion of delegation of power from people to their representatives was absent. The only notion they held about delegation of power was the authority vested in the government by officials who carried out their civil and military tasks from afar. Therefore, when Romans extended their empire they encountered various problems on account of the centralization of power and the lack of an institution that could ensure the government's extension to a vast area without falling into the degeneration of despotism.

### *The English Method*

The English or Teutonic method, as can be presumed, has what the previous ones lacked: *incorporation* and *representation*. Besides that, different from its predecessors, this method did not consider war as an essential part of its development. Although wars often took place at the beginning of its conquest, violence was not desired. As soon as a representative government was established, a great nation could emerge from the peaceful coalition of neighboring states or from their union with a federal agency.

Federalism was not an English idea, though. This concept was familiar to the ancient citadels in Greece, communities characterized by the principles of self-government and delegation of power. The growing relevance of federal states in Greek politics was best represented by the *Boiotian Confederacy* dissolved in 386 B.C since, according to Bernandini, it depicted the most developed constitutions of the Greek world and a "Magna Carta" of the Theban Federal Hegemony; an argument that he elucidates as follows: "Theban

Hegemony in particular – is a period in which a number of states adopted federal constitutions. In some areas such as Arcadia or Thessaly, new federal states were founded or reorganized. In others such as Achaia and Aitolia, we find the tendency to expand a federation by transferring the right of federal citizenship to poleis outside the federation, i.e., to conclude a *sympoliteia* with foreign states” (1).

However, the ambition of some and their hunger for expansion destroyed these ideals, as they absorbed all political life and grew at the cost of the dying parties. That is why some political writers concluded that "a republic should be small and that, without restrictions, the government is practical only in small areas" and, on the contrary, the existence of "a firm and lasting government, capable of maintaining order in vast regions was only possible through absolute monarchy "(Fiske, 2).

It is understandable that the people of the time shared this opinion, but their inaccuracy now is certain. In fact, as Fiske says, despotism is not the strongest form of government but the most fragile. In this historian’s view, the centralized administration of the Roman Empire collapsed not because of abundance, but because of the lack of freedom. Moreover, other ancient civilizations lasted a long time, but the people’s constriction for the omission of the principle of representation led them, sooner or later, to their decline and / or disappearing

The fundamental principle of political freedom did not come without representation. Only when this principle of justice was recognized, the government began to divorce itself from the primitive and barbarous systems of tyranny and looting, and came to a more peaceful and inclusive be. A landmark event at Westminster in 1265 marked a model for national and public application of this principle by the leading popular voice of "no taxes without representation"; as Fiske proclaims, “the deepest seed of the English ideal that still rang out five hundred years later at the Stamp Act Congress, in New York in 1765 “(3).

After this brief analysis of the nation forming methods, it is clear that nations have emerged in alternative ways and scenarios; sharing at first common interests but later using violence and oppression to retain and extent their power. Besides, human aspirations of freedom and representation have eternally existed but have not always been present in men’s government owing to personal

ambitions and the disadvantages of the peoples over their leaders. Although today most of the individuals enjoy these principles in their nations more than ever, certainly, there is still much to do to achieve unity at a large-scale without weakening the sense of personal and local independency. What is more, there are still so many places where the antique oriental and roman models have managed to survive and yet work in some way or another (notably dictatorships like North Korea, Turkmenistan and some Islamic countries, among others).

The nation forming process possesses indeed a long-developing history. His complexity remains a discomfort for those who search for the understanding of its reality and attempt for its conception.

### **A New Definition**

Undoubtedly, each definition of the term *nation* contributes to its comprehension. Smith, concerning the conceptualization of the term, rightly points out that "the generally adopted solution has been to choose criteria that span the" objective-subjective "spectrum (*Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, 12). In other words, the definitions are either "too prescriptive" and show purely" objective "criteria, such as language, religion, and territory; or "too abstract", emphasizing only feelings, perceptions, and ideals that make it more difficult to separate nations from other kinds of collectivities. Therefore, new definitions that attempt to articulate both ends of the spectrum may be vital.

In this spirit, a novel description of the nation that may involve more than the modern concept of the nation-state and show the early development of the nation in ancient groups will be humbly suggested as follows:

A nation is an *association* of people who meet according to their *will* (natively, voluntarily or coercively bonded) in a *defined territory* to initially work together to satisfy *shared needs* and then develop more ties (natural or invented) that are enforced by *education* and a *law* in order to create a *community* of individuals who share a *personal and social identity*; an identity sustained by the pursue of *autonomy* and the promotion of *nationalism*.

### *An Association*

As Anderson would declare, the community is the core of human social nature. For him, a nation is an *imagined community* since not all



members know each other and individuals are usually unaware of their peers and the group's activity. Although it may be arguable that this awareness of the nation's progress and recognition of its members is possible only through the use of modern technologies, this consciousness is evinced in some ancient social groups like the Roman Empire in which different means were used to expand a seemingly 'nationalist' spirit. As Roberts explains, "Romans managed to achieve this imagined community, alongside a sense of simultaneity displayed via religious and political calendars known as *Fasti* that precisely synced festivals between Rome and far flung cities" (17). However, this community may originate at first from a simple common association. The main reason why some people join certain others might be described as *proximity*. This proximity can be explained in genetic, linguistic, or cultural terms. In other words, genetic or physical resemblance, effective communication, and intellectual and emotional affinities may easily create ties among individuals.

### Race

For practical matters, humans tend to gather with those who are closed by; especially in ancient times, when technology was not that developed as well as for connecting people despite the physical distance. This may explain the fact that old nations were typically allied with people of a common race. However, one may avoid falling into the trap of mixing nation and *ethnic group* concepts. Smith assertively expounds that "the ethnic community usually has no political referent, and in many cases lacks a public culture and even a territorial dimension, since it is not necessary for an ethnic community to be in physical possession of its historic territory" (*Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, 12-13).

Nevertheless, racial homogeneity's panorama changed. This phenomenon may stem in part from the increase of migratory movements and trans-border trade in goods and services. Some of these immigrants or merchants had the desire of becoming part of a foreign nation when feeling a certain affinity with its people or culture, or when perceiving some benefits in their association with that land. In this way, the intermingle with individuals from other ethnic groups brought about racial diversity.

Another factor for this diversity was slavery. On one hand, slaves were mainly taken from Africa and Asia to European and American territories to serve in various arduous manual labors. On the

other hand, these developed civilizations conquered various overseas territories usually enslaving their native inhabitants (colonization). In both cases sexual abuse, concubinage, and interracial marriage constituted crucial factors for miscegenation and racial assortment in nations.

Although the coexistence of different ethnic groups may have present various issues, it is race diversity which actually promotes the transformation of a social group into a nation. Rightly observed, Smith's main argument is that "a singular ethnic group does not constitute a nation alone. This is because an ethnic group alone might never develop the features of a state and thus may never feature the common laws for members found in nations" (Smith in Roberts, 21-22)

### Language

Concerning communicative proximity, it is clear that men communicate more easily with the ones who speak their language (or dialect), or, in other words, with whom communication is fluid and intelligible. Generally, nations enhance a dominant shared language at either the vernacular or literate level. Despite this fact, it is observable that several languages could coexist in one nation as various ethnic groups may desire to preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage. But, as Gat makes clear, "dominant does not denote 'only' language, merely that there are one or more languages for conducting official business, or one language that is more common than the others "(24).

On the other hand, as it has been proved in history, many associations have arisen from groups who speak different languages because of their common interests. Their interactions have given birth to the so-called 'pidgins' or proto-languages which later may develop grammar and literature that would allow them to become the official means of communication of that group or association of groups.

### Culture

According to the sociologist Anthony Smith, a nation "must hold and cultivate shared myths, memories symbols and traditions of the historic culture community based on the singular or multiple ethnic groups predominant in the original community". (*The Antiquity of Nations*, 136). In terms of culture, ancient civilizations normally possessed a religion and a culture characterized by practices that had many elements in common. As Roberts claims, "Religion, when it contains a

significant public aspect, can also be an element of common public culture and customs, something that also fits into Smith's conception of shared myths and traditions “(*Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, 16). Some of these shared religious traits are deity or deities worship, animal or/and human sacrifice, ceremonial dances, a cult of the death, and commemorative celebrations. On several occasions, these various cultural groups either mingled together or promoted a single group generating a high culture that was spread by imposition to the regular individuals and by special education and training to those who would or potentially could become leaders of the group. The culture was then standardized through the compilation of practices, oral accounts and religious believes in the form of architectural structures (pyramids, towers, palaces), artistic works (paintings, pottery, utensils) and all sorts of written accounts (papyrus, manuscripts, stone writing, encryptions).

Conversely, Gellner's concept of nation implies that homogeneity in culture is fundamental for a social group to be categorized as such. Even so, in respect of homogeneity, total commonality has never been accomplished in history, not even in modern times. Cultural diversity is somehow able to survive in extreme conditions of tyrannies and dictatorships were they passively or secretly flourish. Sometimes they could grow in such a way that they become a threat to the ones in power.

Nowadays we definitely cannot talk about total homogeneity since several small cultural groups have been discovered, recognized, and respected as part of the national patrimony bringing about plurality and multiculturalism. Moreover, cultures in power or high cultures still remain more accessible to certain groups in society, fact that may be comparable to the privileged situation of elite minorities in the past. Despite our modern egalitarian ideals, a mere glimpse to present facts might reveal a still unequal, segregated reality.

### *Will*

About human volition, at the beginning of nation-building, individuals would generally share common interests and, therefore, would willingly join others to work as a group. Later, individuals would find themselves natively bonded by visible and invisible ties that were previously mentioned. Gellner identifies this willed adherence as loyalty, solidarity, and identification. In short, individuals may accept such a

national alliance through assimilation or motivated by national sentiment. In Roberts words, “willingness is the key component; the people of a given nation cannot be driven to service solely by force or fear of reprisal from an oppressive regime” (17).

People who do not possess a certain level of education, social status, or political power may be imminently caught in the nationalist current without choice, though. This is why unification may occur employing two types of reinforcement, one positive and another negative.

Psychologically speaking, positive reinforcement involves “the addition of a reinforcing stimulus following a behavior that makes it more likely that the behavior will occur again in the future” (Positive Reinforcement and Operant Conditioning). When a satisfactory outcome, event, or reward takes place after an action, that specific response or behavior will be strengthened. In the case of nations, culture, religion, and education may serve as the means to provide or generate such a positive stimulus. Behaviors in favor of the new consolidated group may be rewarded in various ways, namely, public recognition, formalization of practices, the inclusion of ‘heroic’ actions in oral and written accounts, material compensation, and so on.

On the other hand, in Behaviorism, negative reinforcement is seen as a “response or behavior that is strengthened by stopping, removing” (Positive Reinforcement and Operant Conditioning). These aversive stimuli tend to involve some type of discomfort, either physical or psychological. Hence, in political terms, negative reinforcement might be used in the form of fear arouse, use of coercion, and compulsion provocation. Some specific examples of this negative underpinning are freedom deprivation (physical, mental, of expression, and so on) in different ways such as imprisonment, law restrictions, limited or manipulated sources, confiscation of assets, organized persecution, physical punishment, among others.

### *Limited Territory*

Finite limits have been described by Anderson as one of the characteristics of a modern nation. However, organized human social groups have always had defined territorial boundaries. As human activity is limited, men have generally preferred to keep a specific territory under control. Nevertheless, the dimensions and coverage of the conquered territory may vary over the years. Hence, to advocate the

quality of 'limited territory' feature to a social group, and for individuals to perceive a common "homeland", Gat proposes the term *territory contiguity*. According to this historian, "tis concept allows for a nation to expand and change its borders over time as both the United States and ancient Rome did, and as many nations and states have throughout history" (24). However, it was until the Roman Empire that this term took greater significance, probably on account of the plurality of nations claiming territories and the development of more organized ways to keep geographical accounts at the moment.

Human settlements have been characterized by the establishment of different boundaries to claim the possession of a piece of land and protect it from the invasion of undesired individuals. In ancient times, social groups settled in a specific place but did not see the need of identifying boundaries since there was a vast land that was thought to be conquered. Moreover, the concept of private land property did not yet exist. The compartmentalization of the entire terrestrial space in states and entities surrounded by linear borders is a recent fact dated in the transitional period between the 18th and 19th centuries. However, territorial boundaries have been long while identified through the use of fences, walls, architectural constructions, or simply registered in a written account that describe the characteristics of the area and the specific measurements by groups such as the Hebrews, the Babylonians and the Persians.

Although some assure that the concept of *frontier* is merely European, clear examples of the use of such conception in prehistoric times can be seen in cases like the Chinese empire and its famous Chinese Wall which constitutes a massive engineering work that was meant to protect the empire from the enemies and show its extent. Besides that, several civilizations, such as the Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, possessed written chronicles that not only described the exploits of their domination but also their conquered territories

### *Shared Needs*

These people who gathered together in such big empires usually started being a considerably small group of individuals; generally, members of one family, who found in teamwork a solution for the countless challenges of the ancient world. Challenges such as natural disasters, animal and human attacks, production, and recollection of food were some of the reasons why some families decided to join others and form

a bigger group. However, there are many more needs in humans that may have pushed them to associate with others. Hencefore, the satisfaction of needs may be seen as the initial, natural reason behind the origin of nations.

According to Abraham Maslow these necessities can be classified into five categories: physiological, safety, social, esteem, and self-actualization. In his theory, he underlines that individuals are strongly driven by the urgency of the need and, after satisfying one of them, they may try to satisfy others, that can have derived from its human biological nature or can be created by the influence of the environment or society where they interact. Shelter, clothing, food, as before mentioned, are natural needs that all humans need to satisfy to survive. Nonetheless, if one analyses deeply, all the mentioned needs by Maslow may be seen as naturally related to being a human, since the desire of safety, affection, accompaniment, the importance of self-esteem and the hunger for self- development, and actualization are all part of our human identity.

Nonetheless, the degree of importance and the level of satisfaction might be minimized or maximized in a subjective, artificial way. As an example, modern men are nowadays driven by the spirit of consumerism that has persuaded them that what they have is never enough. All the same, as the necessities remain the same in modernity, the reasons behind alliance in a specific social group are the same, one's satisfaction.

Nevertheless, some have abusively managed to satisfy their 'needs' at the expense of others' wellness and freedom. As an example, the process of the transformation of a nation into an empire generally stems from men's ambitious nature of possessing and controlling more and more. However, on one hand, expansion may be justified by the need for security and stability. In ancient times war was almost the only option to assure a territory's tranquility and safety. Some cases of covenants or agreements among two nations are present in the governance of ancient civilizations as evidence of a sporadic use of more 'diplomatic' approaches, though. On the other hand, the need for social order and ambition of some may have used hierarchies, racism, and violence to ratify their rights to be in power. Nowadays corruption, manipulation, and misinformation may be seen as the main means for such trickery.

In any case, it is clear that the satisfaction of needs, of all or some, is the motor of unification; needs that become the natural or invented ties that make people work and live together as a body. Anderson described such invented ties as *imagined*. Nonetheless, he may have referred to them as so not in the sense of their fabrication out of the artificial, for they are still originated from primary, secondary or general needs; but rather that their formalization may be done by abstract liaisons that are not always obvious natural commonalities between the parts. Many examples of such relations can be seen in ancient times, where people not only related to some in terms of similarity in race or language but in the name of common interest.

### *Education*

National ties are reinforced positively and negatively, as mentioned above, being education a seemingly appropriate and legit form of what one could call “national indoctrination”. Gellner claims that for some group to be named as a nation, it should hold a unified, sanctioned, and well-defined educational system. Indeed, some ancient civilizations such as the Egyptians and Greeks counted with an educational agency that sustained the religious belief and culture of their group and provided a division of labor through the special training of individuals for certain roles. For example, in Ancient Greece, as Oestari evinces, there were two forms of education, formal and informal. Formal education consisted in the attendance to a public school or the hiring of a private tutor. By its part, the informal one, although it was provided by an unpaid instructor and did not occur in public places, it constituted an essential component of someone’s identity.

Although in most of the cases in ancient times formal education was not enjoyed by the majority of the population, the elite’s educational background influenced their actions and, therefore, affected the group as a whole. On their part, crowds were indoctrinated in the nation’s religious and cultural practices by encouraging or forcing their participation in various rituals, traditions, and habits. Besides, for those who did not have access to written sources, orality and parental instruction were used as a means for preserving such cultural traits. However, unfortunately, indoctrination of minority groups, especially slaves, was most of the time disregarded as these were not considered officially part of the nation.

Nonetheless, as incredible as it may seem, similar cases can be identified in present times. Despite our modern egalitarian educational ideals, a mere glimpse to present facts might reveal the inequality of our reality. Many people in the world are still alphabets and do not count on access to formal, quality education. Although the global literacy rate for all people aged 15 and above is considerably much higher than before, an 86.3% according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, this remaining percentage illustrates the condition of millions of people who, despite our current technologies, continue ‘disconnected’ from any formal education and the advancements of modernity. This fact that evinces that an educational system that is able to reach all the individuals in a society is remains a dream.

### *Law*

Furthermore, national ties are created and reinforced by *law*. Rules, parameters of behavior, and restrictions have always been seen as fundamental for the cohabitation and preservation of any social group. This may constitute an overlapping of two concepts *nation* and *state*. In Smith’s words, “nations have common laws and customs for all members, features that can overlap with states” (*Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History*, 13). However, the major features of a nation are somewhat more complex than the denominated *states*. In this sense, *nation* might be seen as a more extensive term that involves other minor concepts. Moreover, Smith clarifies that *nation* is not interchangeable with *state* because “states are tied to institutional activity whereas nations are better described as a type of community” (Smith in Roberts, 18-19).

In addition, the establishment of special people or entities to ensure the accomplishment of the law in large groups originates from the very beginnings of human civilization. It has evolved and become more sophisticated with the pass of the time thanks to the development and expansion of certain social groups and the enhancement of technological tools. Therefore, one may argue that what is nowadays denominated as *state*, a regulator that ensures the accomplishment of law, has existed since long ago in various forms in ancient civilizations.

It may be observed that in almost every influential group there is commonly a specific, written law which is imposed to regular individuals by special workers and officers who help leaders keep their control and/or ensure harmony among the peoples. For instance, most



of the big empires counted with an army that not only defended their nation against enemies but also applied the law to the civilians and punished those who did not respect the state guidelines. Nevertheless, the relations of power (who have the power and their characteristics and linkage with the subdued ones) may differ from nation to nation, as Gellner explains in his typology of nationalisms.

### *Identity and Nationalism*

Although Gellner so certain argues that nationalism "does not have any very deep roots in the human psyche" (35), the apparently inherent and universal need of personal and social identity may show an oppositional reality. Gat rejects Gellner's modernist view on nationalism emphatically claiming that "if nations are both rare and recent, then how did a "profound emotion as nationalism suddenly spring up in nineteenth century Europe from no apparent source in the human psyche?" (17)

As a result of the above mentioned types of reinforcement of ties, individuals in a certain group start to sense a feeling of belonging and identification with a specific government, culture, or piece of land; a feeling that pervades their personal self-awareness and self-esteem. This individual emotive state is shared by others in the community becoming a collective phenomenon that is promoted by cultural artifacts, national symbols, nation's history, and national consciousness.

In psychological terms, national identity is seen as an awareness of difference, a feeling, and recognition of 'we' and 'they'. National identity is the reflection of a sense of political and cultural unity denominated *nationalism*, identified by Gellner as "primarily, a political principle, which holds that the political and the nation unit should be congruent; the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment; or a social movement that is actuated by the sentiment of this kind".

According to Naim & James, nationalism is manifested in mainly two ways, patriotism and chauvinism. When the expression of one's national identity is seen in a positive light, it is called patriotism which is characterized by national pride and love for one's nation. The extreme expression of such sentiment is denominated chauvinism, which refers to the feeling of superiority and extreme loyalty to a group.

### *Autonomy*

On the other hand, national identity or *nationalism* is sustained by the extent of its *autonomy* or what Anderson calls its *sovereignty*. This may refer, first, to the right or condition of self-government or the quest of such a right, and, second, to the grade of sustainability of the nation and its interdependence with other nations in different fields such as the economy (import and exportations, trades, monetary value), the industry (commerce, production, innovation), and the politics (diplomatic relations, international agreements).

Moreover, autonomy may be seen as a search of self-identity and development that have continually characterized human settlements as a response to pluralism. It is represented by the desire of a social group of acting in accordance with what they see as their own principles, morality ethics. Examples of this search or its accomplishment throughout history are numerous. As Berck would agree, Greek civilization had quite clear standards of what they considered a “civilized republic” that possessed a particular culture and morality and fought for its honoring and preservation.

### **Further Considerations and Conclusions**

Nation-building is a long way process that has its roots in the very beginning of human civilization. Many of these ancient societies subtly possessed similar characteristics of our modern nation-states. Factors such as association, will, motivation, territory, culture, education, law, identity, power, and autonomy, were crucial for minority groups to become a nation. These features have been present since long ago but have evolved over the years; notwithstanding, despite human development, they remain the same in essence.

On its part, nationalism could not always be seen as a cause but more as a result of such process, in opposition to Gellner’s asseverations that “it is nationalism which engenders nation”. This is evinced in the case of some ancient civilizations whose motivations to gather and become a unit, as before mentioned, stem from shared needs of different kinds (security, food production, trading and transaction, race or genealogy preservation) and not from a seemingly “shared group identity” or “shared national spirit”. For, what could be the base of such nationalism that still does not count on the strength and motivation that comes from a nation? How could one call nationalism to a spirit or movement not yet linked to any concrete entity? As already stated, Gat

also ardently rejects Gellner's modernist view on nationalism declaring that "if nations are both rare and recent, then how did a profound emotion as nationalism suddenly spring up in nineteenth century Europe from no apparent source in the human psyche?" (17). Therefore, nationalism may originate from deep roots that only become defined and visible when a nation is already flourishing. Before that, motivations behind the desire of adhering and organizing in one single unit may be of various nature.

Nonetheless, Gellner's point proves to be right in some modern-time cases as this opposite, "unnatural" phenomenon has increasingly taken place in different areas. Nowadays, many "old nations" once thought fully consolidated, find themselves challenged by "sub"-nationalisms within their borders. Some of these sub-nationalisms succeed in their independency pursuit by means of alienation, confrontation, or conspiracy. As a result, almost every year the United Nations admits new members. As Anderson assures "the end of nationalism is remotely in sight" (3). However, the reason for this trend might be that new social groups who want to prevail in their supremacy's quest are not able to find enough anchoring in present ties but more in a retaking and transformation of ancient bonds. Only historical, old-time ties may provoke such explosive devotion and willingness to sacrifice and die for one's ethnic and national collective. In any case, the antiquity of nation's reality is undeniable; so is its complexity, in origin and in form, since no rule could be set for the number of shapes in which it has pervaded human civilization. Besides, its preponderance increases day by day becoming an apparently "modern phenomenon" from which no one can escape. This is why, despite our efforts to give an explanation, there might be not a single scientific description that could adequately and thoroughly define *nation*. Therefore, as Seton Watson argues, the concept of nation might not be possibly determinable. The only thing one may have certitude of is that "the term has existed and exists" (Anderson, 3).

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