The evolution of 'Nation' concept and its relevance for contemporary historical moment

La evolución del concepto de Nación y su relevancia para el momento histórico contemporáneo

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Abstract

Understanding the evolution of the concept of "nation" is crucial in comprehending the shifting dynamics of identity, national policy, and global interactions. By tracing the historical development of this concept, from its early origins to its contemporary manifestations, the article aims to shed light on how the idea of the Nation has transformed and adapted to social, political, and ideological changes. The retrospective analysis of 'national' discourse makes possible to demonstrate how the Nation concept expanded its content during the recent centuries. The philosophical and historical study of the Nation provided in the article, and its research from the functional and axiological standpoints, drives us to make a few general assumptions: Nation still can be that kind of mobilizing force that helps unite people in resistance to external aggression; the concept of

Resumen

Entender la evolución del concepto de "nación" es crucial para comprender la cambiante dinámica de la identidad, la política nacional y las interacciones globales. Al trazar el desarrollo histórico de este concepto, desde sus primeros orígenes hasta sus manifestaciones contemporáneas, el artículo pretende arrojar luz sobre cómo la idea de Nación se ha transformado y adaptado a los cambios sociales, políticos e ideológicos. El análisis retrospectivo del discurso 'nacional' permite demostrar cómo el concepto de Nación ha ampliado su contenido durante los últimos siglos. El estudio filosófico e histórico de la Nación aportado en el artículo, y su investigación desde el punto de vista funcional y axiológico, nos lleva a realizar algunas suposiciones generales: la Nación todavía puede ser ese tipo de fuerza movilizadora

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Nation presumably does not have enough resources to influence the highly developed countries, but still preserves its potential to transform the societies in the developing countries. Some findings and insights presented in this article may contribute into further theoretical research, as well as policy development, and a deeper understanding of the role of nations in an increasingly interconnected world.

Keywords: nation, aristocracy, estate, society, unification, function, culture, politics, values.

que ayuda a unir a la gente en la resistencia a la agresión externa; el concepto de Nación presumiblemente no dispone de recursos suficientes para influir en los países altamente desarrollados, pero conserva su potencial para transformar las sociedades de los países en desarrollo. Algunas de las conclusiones presentados en este artículo pueden contribuir a futuras investigaciones teóricas, así como al desarrollo de políticas y a una comprensión más profunda del papel de las naciones en un mundo cada vez más interconectado.

Palabras clave: nación, aristocracia, estado, sociedad, unificación, función, cultura, política, valores.

Introduction

The concept of "nation" has been an influential aspect of human societies for the last four centuries, shaping the course of history, politics, and culture. However, in today's rapidly changing global landscape, the meaning and relevance of the nation have become increasingly complex and contested. This article seeks to examine the evolution of the concept of "nation" over time and explore its current meaning.

In the present historical moment characterized by globalization, digitalization, migration, and multiculturalism, the concept of "nation" remains extremely significant, and continues to play a vital role in shaping individual and collective identities, as well as influencing social, economic, and political systems. The *actuality* of this research is connected with the multifaceted significance of the "nation" concept, studied in comparative-historical way retrospectively, and in contemporary world, exploring its implications for governance, national identity formation, and international relations.

The *object* of this study is the concept of 'Nation' as sociocultural, political, and ideological phenomenon.

The *purpose* of this study is to show how the Nation was changing its content during centuries, and what point it has come to nowadays. To achieve the mentioned purpose, we have to complete the following tasks: to trace the main stages of the "nation" concept evolution (we limit this study to the European cultural and political space); to identify the key characteristics of such a concept as a Nation from a functional and axiological points of view; to evaluate the influence prospects of the "nation" concept in the modern world.

The *importance* of given research, as we believe, is connected with the need to provide critical examination of the concept of "nation", studying the milestones of its evolution and trying to evaluate its contemporary relevance. Thus, this article aims to contribute to the scholarly discourse surrounding the complex nature of national identities and their impact on the present historical context.

Theoretical Framework or Literature Review

The *current knowledge* of the topic is presented in some publications from different fields of social studies. There are a lot of challenges and complexities in the interpretation of Nation's relevance at contemporary historical moment, considering the controversial outcomes of migration processes, erosion of national identity, issues of equality of opportunity and social justice, etc. To understand the concept of Nation correctly, we should keep in mind its historical background, and look carefully at various aspects of its implication in today's life. Among the publications, meaningful for better understanding of the researched subject, there should be mentioned: the works focused on the matters of national culture (Pickel, 2013; Orgad, 2015), nationalism (Jensen & Mouritsen, 2017; Johnston, 2017; Larin, 2019; Tamir, 2021), migration and related issues (Joppke, 2007; Antonsich, 2016; Antonsich, 2018; Waal, 2020), multicultural nation and universal values (Wilson, 2015; Borinshtein et al., 2021; Schutter, 2021), national identity (Henderson & McEwen, 2005; Huddy & Khatib, 2007; Huang et al., 2023), ethno-cultural diversity (Smith, 1988; Antonsich & Petrillo, 2018; Matthews & Zain, 2022), the educational system influence on the national consciousness (Borinshtein et al., 2022), national self-affirmation through the scientific

and technological leadership (Stovpets, 2012; Svyrydenko & Stovpets, 2020), nations as justified substate authorities (Silva, 2022).

Methodology

Of the research is based on a systematic approach, comparative-historical, deductive and dialectical methods, axiological and functionalistic approaches. The abovementioned methodology allows to trace all the main stages in the development of the concept of "nation", and to compare semantic changes within each stage.

Results and discussion

When we want to start with the question "what is a nation?" we immediately encounter a certain problem, since the nation is a polysemantic word. The nation arises as an idea in various contexts. Secondly, the idea of a nation changes in the path of history: between the 17th and 20th centuries this concept shifts, varies its meanings; it is unsteady and fluid. For the Roman civilization, when they translated the Greek words "ethnos", "ethne" in lingua Latina as "nationes", nations were a naturalistic pre-state (before-state) concept, and often a synonymous with barbarian: there were full Roman citizens (cives Romani), but there were also representatives of various non-Roman nations (called: Provinciales, Peregrini). Something similar happened in early Christianity: the so-called "nationes" were deemed as pagans, people who had not yet risen to the level of Civilization. Now we shall try to unfold the ambiguity and dynamism of the Nation concept, by showing the four main contexts of modern understanding for the Nation.

The first understanding is a "nation of estates" or "nation of aristocrats". For example, let's take the German word combination *Adel Nation* (aristocratic nation): "der Adel" could be translated as *Noble*, *Aristocracy*, so here's the aristocratic understanding of a Nation, also called the "Nation of Estates", meaning by that only the first and the second estates (clerical nobility and secular nobility). Such an interpretation for the Nation (as a community of nobles) is typical for 16-17th centuries, and this idea is directed against the absolute power of the monarch (Wrede, et al., 2016).

After the religious wars of the 16th century, under the influence of Luther and Calvin, and other Protestant theologians and thinkers, the importance of secular power increases and the modern state itself arises, the vertical strengthens: the monarch centralizes and unifies the system of government. Of course, the absolutism oppresses the aristocrats, going against the interests of those who used to be almost equal to the king. Therefore, this political conflict gives rise to the idea of a Nation in circles of the aristocracy. It becomes a kind of instrument for limiting absolutism. And in minds of the aristocratic camp, there's a will to remind the king that he is not the only one in charge of this system, and there is a more complex system of relations around political power.

We should emphasize how conflicting this concept was: the "Nation of Estates" was directed against the power of an absolute monarch. But still that was a very small fraction of the entire population. For instance, if we take the history of Rzeczpospolita - the Polish-Lithuanian-Commonwealth, and if we even take the 17th century, we should ask ourselves: who was the Nation in this large territory? - only the nobility (Szlachta, i.e. gentry, aristocracy, the nobles), and they were mainly in the Polish and Lithuanian segments of the whole populations (we say it approximately, because then neither Poland nor Lithuania nor Ukraine did not exist in their current form, just as neither Italy existed then as a single state, nor Germany).

Trying to answer, who made up the "nation" at those times Rzeczpospolita, we use T. Snyder's work "The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999". He expresses an opinion, that the nobles were only about 10 percent of entire population (who called Szlachta) in the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and in the Ukrainian territory (before and after so-called Het'manshyna) - only about 2 % of population (Snyder, 2003: 112), so at that time they were the "blood of the nation". Therefore, the concept of "a Nation of estates", typical for the 16th century, was associated with privileges and freedoms, which had to be defended.

In the middle of the 17th century (1648-1654) Ukrainian hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky was fighting against Poland, or Rzeczpospolita. This struggle, in historiography being often called as the "national liberation war", in reality was the struggle for the rights, freedoms and privileges of the estate, to which hetman Khmelnytsky belonged, and the spokesman of whose interests he naturally was. It is clear, that hetman Khmelnytsky relied on the broader masses of people, not only on the nobles. But in his mind, probably, there was no idea of the liberation for the entire Ukrainian nation, since such a concept

had not yet been formed. Those times, they thought in other categories, class-estate.

By the way, Rzeczpospolita (1569-1795), located on the lands of modern Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, was quite comparable to those times France. For comparison: France, in the middle of 17th century, had a territory of about five hundred thousand square kilometers, with a population up to seventeen million people. Rzeczpospolita, in the same historical period, had a territory more than eight hundred thousand square kilometers, with a population about eleven million people (1650). And only around 12 % of people in Rzeczpospolita could be identified as a Nation - the bearers of privileges and freedoms. Meanwhile, peasants were not a "nation", only an aristocratic minority belonged to the "nation". And they were arguing with the King, in order to defend their status.

The second understanding of Nation is a so-called "nation of the people" that originates from the end of the 18th century to the middle of the 19th century, in a non-aristocratic environment, but inside of the emerging third estate (they were scientists, thinkers, writers, lawyers, bankers, merchants, entrepreneurs - all those who previously lacked a place in politics, since all these places was belonging only to aristocrats).

The idea of "political nation", "nation of the People" was shaped in 18th century France, first in the Encyclopedia of Diderot and d'Alembert. "Encyclopedia" was firstly published in 1751, and such authors as Diderot, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau and other Enlightenment thinkers were reconsidering the concepts of "people", "nation", "citizenship", "political power". But the definition of the Political Nation, its theoretical concept, arises only in 1789, in conditions of The French Revolution, when Abbé Sieyès has published his famous pamphlet "What Is the Third Estate?" (Sieyès, 2014).

When a conflict with the king arisen, which led to the beginning of the French Revolution, Abbé Sieyès was one of the trumpets of the newborn idea of the People's Nation. By this time, there were several pamphlets written by Sieyès about the upcoming convocation of the Estates General. These writings of Sieyès have made a significant impact on the people, in particular, his "An Essay on Privilege" (1788), the brochure "Recognition and exposure of human and civic rights" (1789), and the mentioned famous pamphlet that contains the following theses: "...What is the Third Estate? - Everything. What has it been hitherto in the

political order? - Nothing. What does it desire to be? - To become something..." (Sieyès, 2014). I.e. in the understanding of the bourgeois revolutionaries, the third estate was the whole nation, but it was not given a place in politics, it was not given a word, and now they are entering the arena. Later, Emmanuel Sieyès, being elected to the Convent, has supported the execution of King Louis XVI (1792), and after that, during the '18th Brumaire coup' in France (1799) has supported rise to power of Napoleon Bonaparte. It's rather symbolic that during the execution of the 'Old Order France' last monarch, the crowd was shouting "Vive la *Nation*!".

The idea of a "People's Nation" is sometimes called a Political Nation (FR: *Nation politique*, DE: *Volksnation*), and in many sources one can find the thesis that it was the French who invented the concept of the 'nation' in the modern sense. For them, the nation is a civil and civilizational concept, not the question of blood (ethnos) or language. Thus, if in the first sense we observed "a nation of aristocrats", "a nation of the noble estate", then the second incarnation of the idea of a nation is the revolutionary bourgeois ideas of the middle 18th century. Among the results of The French Revolution was a creation of the concept of "political nation", where citizenship (or allegiance) becomes the key feature.

But the Germans didn't think like the French. They had totally different political situation, and other forms of nationhood. And when the Germans were reflecting on the political situation before and during Napoleonic wars, Kant's students - famous philosophers Herder and Fichte - were thinking like that: in France, it seems everything clear - single state, common borders, and the French are rather "old nation"; they have the core territory formed a very long time ago. But the Germans live in many different German states. For a long time, the Germans have been nurturing the idea of unification, and it is gradually being embodied in the form of the 'Second Reich' (i.e. the German Empire in 1871-1918). But as a result of the First World War, their empire collapsed. In a distorted form, the idea of national resurrection has found its terrible incarnation in the 'Third Reich' (1933-1945).

What was the German idea about the Nation? In the middle of the 19th century, the Germans were living in many regions across Central Europe. And they have formulated an idea of "Kulturnation", meaning by that not an estate-based, and not a political, but "a culture-based nation". It's a kind of community, which lies

upon a cognate culture. Thus, there were many political state formations, which seemed to be scattered and decentralized, but they were spiritually united by a common culture and one language - German. So, "Kulturnation", or "a culture-based nation", was explained as a nation, whose cultural history could be traced back over a long period of time, and whose bearers have had an appropriate mentality and imagination of their own common culture.

If the abovementioned French idea of the nation is based upon the citizenship principle, then German concept of the nation means: one language, single culture, common spiritual space that unites different people living in many states. That implied, the Germans were feeling themselves as a single nation for that they belonged to the same culture. But they still needed a single state, so they began building their 'Reich'. This idea was reinforced, on the one hand, by representatives of the romanticism in art and literature, and on the other hand, by German thinkers. Among them was an outstanding philosopher J. Fichte, sometimes called "the father of German nationalism". He proclaimed his "Speeches to the German Nation" (Reden an die deutsche Nation) in 1807, calling Germans to national self-consciousness (Fichte, 2008). Here we contemplate the third context in understanding the Nation.

And finally, the fourth context could be mentioned when we interpret the Nation as a sovereign state, or the national state (the German word for this notion is "Staatsnation"). Such an understanding arises only in the second half of the 19th century, when the idea of nations' self-determination emerges. That was a time, when European politics was in total chaos. Several concepts overlaid: the construct "nation - empire - colonial power" arose all in one. Additionally, in the 19th century, there were renewed the attempts to restore the old estate system, also known as the "sacred order". It happened after the Congress of Vienna (1815), finalized with agreements on restoration of the feudal-absolutist monarchies, seriously destroyed by the French Revolution (1789-1799) and the Napoleonic wars. New borders of European states were defined.

During this period, the four great systems - Austria, Russia, England and France - ensured the European order and balance of power. But simultaneously, in the same 19th century, began a so-called «Spring of Nations», a succession of European revolutions 1848-1849, which were anti-feudal and national liberation directed.

These events influenced the fate of Italy, and the fate of Germany, and the political fate of Ukraine, which was torn between the Rzeczpospolita and the Russian Empire. The fourth partition of Poland (following the results of the Vienna Congress 1815) and the suppression of the Polish uprisings changed the balance of power, and led to a surge in the national liberation movement of the Ukrainian people.

In Kyiv, there had emerged a secret political society "The Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius", established in 1846 under the leadership of Mykola Kostomarov. In 1847, he wrote his conceptual work - "The Books of Genesis of the Ukrainian Nation" (Kostomarov, 2021) that was officially published just in 1918 because of the Russian censorship.

The Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood was established a few years before the "Spring of Nations" in Eastern Europe. Its formation in 1846 aimed to rekindle the principles of traditional Ukrainian brotherhoods and to envision a resurgence of Ukrainian national identity, including the aspiration for national autonomy within a united and equitable Slavic federation. However, in March 1847, the Russian Empire's authorities swiftly quashed the Brotherhood, which was accompanied by the exile or imprisonment of the majority of its members (Glyz, 1990: 37). Among key members of the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius were Ukrainian political thinkers, historians, ethnographers, and writers: Mykola Kostomarov (1818-1885), Panteleimon Kulish (1819-1897), Yurii Andruzky (1827-1864), Vasyl Bilozersky (1825-1899), Mykola Hulak (1821-1899), Opanas Markovych (1822-1867), Oleksandr Navrotsky (1823-1892), Ivan Posiada (1823-1894), Dmytro Pylchykov (1821-1893), and Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861).

The Cyril and Methodius Society's objectives encompassed the liberalization of Imperial Russia's political and social framework, aligning with its members' Christian values and the rising Slavophilic ideologies embraced by the nation's progressive intellectual community. The society derived its name from Saints Cyril and Methodius, esteemed as ideological authorities of Slavic nations, for their roles in disseminating Christianity and creating the Cyrillic alphabet, which continues to be in use among Slavic languages. Additionally, the Society aspired to eradicate serfdom, promote widespread public education, and reshape the Russian Empire into a federation of liberated Slavic peoples, with

Russians being one of the equal - rather than the dominant nation (along with Ukrainians, Belarusians, Poles, and even Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, and Bulgarians), with the implementation of the liberal democratic principles of freedom of speech, thought and religion (Glyz, 1990: 38).

Among other national movements, there was an Italian Unification movement, il Risorgimento (1815-1861), which has also inspired the participants of the Ukrainian national liberation movement to strengthen a Ukrainian political nation. In particular, they were inspired by ideas of Giuseppe Mazzini (Bayly & Biagini, 2008). The penetration of Mazzini's ideas (Mazzini, 1965) into Ukraine took place almost simultaneously with their emergence. Despite the "danger" of his works, as they were interpreted in the Russian Empire, there was their limited access to the circles of Ukrainian intellectuals. In those times, one of the "gates" of revolutionary ideas, along with St. Petersburg, Warszawa, Kyiv, was also the "free city of Odessa", porto franco, where Italian sailors were the numerous foreigners. A lot of English, French, Italian and German-language magazines appeared in the capital cities of the Russian Empire via the port of Odessa, albeit after being censored. Therefore, legally and illegally, Mazzini's name and his works were publicized, and make their influence together with the ideas of German political philosophers J. Herder with his 1773 manifesto "Of German Character and Art" (Herder & Goethe, 1964), J. Fichte with his famous "Addresses to the German Nation", 1808, and with the literary works of Romanticism authors who inspired Ukrainian intellectuals laid the foundations of its own mod*e*rn nation-building process in the middle of 19th century.

If we take a pan-European context, as a result of national movements, a strange symbiosis arises: on the one hand, large empires (Austria, the Russian and Ottoman Empires, France, Britain) restrain national movements. Back in 1815, the so-called "Holy Alliance" was proclaimed, a reactionist coalition between the Emperor Franz I of Austria, King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia, and the Russian Emperor Alexander I. On the other hand, new big systems are being created under the auspices of the national revival: this is Italy in 1861, and this is a united Germany in 1871. In addition, small nation-states arise, such as Belgium, which takes shape as an independent state in 1830 as a Catholic revolution against Protestant Holland. The creation of national states (Staatsnation) can be illustrated very vividly by the examples of Italy

unification, and after ten years - the Germany. So, in the 19th century Europe, all these turbulent changes would become the basis of global future historical events and upheavals.

Thus, we can trace this intricate ideological movement from the nation as estate-based structure, in the 17th century, to the idea of the "state-nation" in the 19th century. Then, also arose the idea of class, the idea of race, and the idea of internationalism. All this together - the ideas of "political nation", "cultural nation", the movement of romanticism, national revival, nationalism, inter-nationalism - was combined on various grounds, and began to operate within the framework of centralized large states, in some cases as colonial empires.

An important term here is the concept of "state-forming nation" (titular nation). At this stage, four main principles of national identification stand out: the school, the army, the language, and the writing of national history. European powers were seeking to strengthen their influence by shaping the identity of the nation-state within the framework of school and university curricula, with an emphasis on history of a nation, the development of the literary language. Because, when in 1861 Italy was created as a single state, only two percent of Italians used literary Italian language on a regular basis. It is widely known the statement of famous Italian politician, Massimo d'Azeglio: "We have made Italy, now we have to be Italians" (Hom, 2013).

It is notable that after the Risorgimento, when the first parliament of Italy was convened in Torino on March 17, 1861, Italians from different regions gathered - from Piemonte, from Toscana, from Basilicata, from Sicilia, from everywhere. But what language could they speak to each other? - in French! As those times literary Italian was spoken by an absolute minority. There were many languages and dialects. The Italian language had to be recreated. And the same way as today's language of universal communication is English, but in previous eras it was Koine Greek, then lingua Latina, and later the French took over this function in Europe.

Another example was France itself. Being an "older" nation with a centralized single state, France faced the similar language matter: when The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen was proclaimed and printed in 1789, out of 85 French departments, only 15 departments could read it in French! Only a small percentage of the French spoke literary French, the rest used local dialects (Forrest & Jones, 1991). The same

problem will later arise in Italy at the time of unification. And the situation was approximately the same in all the newly created nation-states of the second half of the 19th century.

Building a nation is unification, including the matters of language. That is why, since the middle of the 19th century, nation-states have been implementing the principles of unification through schools, universities, the army, and other social institutions. Ironically, all these principles of patriotic education and narratives of national identity were created in order to know clearly: which commissariat, what military enlistment office should people go to, when there's a call to arms, declaring a general mobilization (in the name of the national interests protection).

Obviously, here we should also mention such a hybrid that takes place in the United States, because the Americans call themselves a "nation of nations", meaning an incredible mixture of different ethnic communities, social groups, different waves of emigration. Their unification is based on the socio-political ideals of America. Of course, every nation-building process has its unique details, its cultural, historical and regional features, and some geopolitical imperatives depending on their neighbors. Some of these issues were shown in research works of several authors (Diamond, 2020; Snyder, 2003; Snyder, 2022), demonstrating the total diversity of nation-building tracks.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world was spectating the emergence of new political systems, due to the awakening of nations in Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic countries, Georgia, Armenia, the countries of Central Asia. I.e. after the restraints of the socialist supranational system, explosions of national self-consciousness were taking place everywhere in the post-Soviet space. Simultaneously, in Europe we observe processes of "smoothing" the idea of a nation, processes of unification in the name of supranational projects, such as the European Union.

Now we should mention how the idea of a Nation is defined by leading theorists and researchers of nationalism in our time. T. Parsons believes that the nation is a system of *value orientations*, which are common to members of a given social system. E. Gellner thinks that Nation is a *function* of the Modern era society (Gellner, 1983). It's important to draw attention that he is not talking about any type of society, but only about "mod*e*rn society" that arose in the era of Modernity, from about the 18th century. The term "mod*e*rn" used as a concept, meaning a society changed as a result of industrialization, urbanization, secularization, the development of institutions of the state and civil society.

While T. Parsons proposes an axiological approach to unfold the nature of a Nation, E. Gellner focuses on the functionalist one. Gellner says, the "function" is the key word in understanding a nation. The main task of nationalism, according to Gellner, is the function of mobilizing the community, organizing it and directing it towards the transformation of the entire socio-economic system. Thus, the nation becomes a political instrument for renewing the economic system.

E. Gellner also says that, principally, the carriers of the national idea in the second half of the 19th century were small groups of intellectuals. He gives an example about Ukraine. What was Kyiv or Kharkiv as centers of the Ukrainian national idea in the middle of the 19th century? There were only a few dozen houses of local elite, and only several thousand people, the intellectuals who dared to write texts and speak openly about the national idea. Only a few thousand people, considering that the population of Kyiv at that time was already about six hundred thousand. The same was true for Poland and Romania. And this was a pan-European tendency: there were some enlightened minority who were "sick" with an important mission - to wake up the Nation. Gellner believes that the mod*e*rn idea of the Nation arises only in the industrial system of economic relations. The process of industrialization brings to life the idea of the nation, because it became necessary to mobilize the productive forces, and it is easiest to group them around a certain political center, on the basis of the national idea. Thus, the Nation is assessed as a kind of mobilizing function in socio-economic context.

A powerful wave of national unification is happening in Ukraine since 2022 due to the direct military invasion of Russian troops. Of course, it is not a national movement as it was on the eve of the First World War. But the mobilizing function of the National idea is rather obvious: Ukraine uses national rhetoric as a tool for strengthening Ukrainian defense potential. Here the Nation concept is not only a means to show cultural uniqueness (in the meaning that Ukrainians are not a kind of Russians, and Ukraine is not a part of Russia), but it's also becoming a function to unite efforts in resisting the imperial ambitions of Russia, in Ukraine's desire to save its statehood, and to follow the

vector in the development chosen by Ukrainian society. From the one hand, Ukraine is trying to survive as a political nation. From the other hand, most of Ukrainian society aspire to a supranational structure because the European Union, being a union of European Nations, stays *above* any nation, though Ukraine considers such integration as a "key national interest". This picture looks rather complicated.

B. Anderson interprets the nation as an imagined political community, an image, which is the result of a collective imagination. Nationalism, - he says, - is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they did not exist before (Anderson, 2016). Thus, under the metaphor of "awakening nations" we are talking about their construction, about the creation of nations for some purpose, not natural, but artificial.

H. Schulze says, at the beginning of the 20th century, the idea of the Nation takes possession of the masses (Schulze, 2004). In other words: what in the middle of the 19th century was the deed of educated minorities, with the beginning of the 20th century becomes a mass phenomenon, and this mass movement spreads over various countries and territories. The pan-European military-political crisis, which has become a global crisis in 1914, has led everyone to realization of the need to create some kind of universal levers for managing political processes, and broad institutions for coordinating national interests, associated with a collective security policy. We can recall W. Wilson's "14 points". One explicit result of his efforts was the creation of the League of Nations in 1920. Though it didn't cope with its task to prevent the Second World War, but it became a predecessor of the United Nations. And the very names of the mentioned organizations - the League of Nations, the United Nations - is an obvious recognition of the importance of the Nation concept at the global level.

We have already mentioned Abbé Sieyès (1748-1836) who wrote a pamphlet "What Is the Third Estate?" (1789), changing discourse from 'aristocratic' one to the 'revolutionary': not the nobles are the core of Nation, but people's masses. In the Romanticism epoch, the emphasis was finally transferred from "three estates" to the people as such, and the whole people became a system-forming element. The Ukrainian historian and politician M. Hrushevsky in his monograph "History of Ukraïna-Rus' " (1898) was already writing about the People (of all classes) as the main subject of

history (Hrushevsky, 2021: 418), not only about the third estate.

A significant role in this expansion of the interpretation of the "nation" concept was played by E. Renan (1823-1892). His lecture at the University of Sorbonne in 1882 - "What is a Nation?" - is known for the statements that a nation is not identical to a race (at that time racism is gaining momentum, forming a kind of triangle: empire - nation - race). Any nation is an ethnic mixture. The nation is also not identical to the language, otherwise how to explain the separation of the United States from Britain, or the countries of Latin America from Spain? A nation is not a religious unity either, since Europe is multi-confessional. And a nation is not a geography. Then what is a nation? - Renan asks. - This is a great solidarity established by the feeling of sacrifice.

Renan says about it: "Man is not a slave neither to languages, nor religions, neither to river flows, nor mountain ranges. Mountains don't know how to carve out countries... Only a great gathering of people with common sense and a burning heart creates a moral consciousness called a nation" (Renan, 2018: 102).

The existence of a Nation implies a "continued consent". E. Renan uses a metaphor that a nation is "a daily referendum". . A crucial aspect of national identity involves the ongoing willingness of individuals to be a part of their nation. Renan characterizes a nation as a perpetual "daily plebiscite". Switzerland serves as a notable illustration of a nation created through the collective choice of its people (Renan & Hapgood, 2010). The same argument could be properly defined by the German term "Willensnation" ("nation-by-volition"), used to describe the status of any federal state created by people's choice, not necessary along ethnic boundaries or religious belonging.

Another thought-provoking proposition is that nations are founded not only on collective memory but also on what they deliberately choose to forget together. This idea is commonly cited in studies related to history and political science that explore nationalism and national identity issues. The act of intentionally forgetting, especially when it involves unpleasant historical truths, can sometimes play a pivotal role in the establishment of a nation, or its strengthening. Such an idea derives not only from Renan's works, but also from some resent

works related to national questions (Westover, 2004).

Among significant things Renan says about a nation's nature, there is frequent confusion between the idea of nationhood and of racial or linguistic groupings. Renan believes that nations developed from the common needs of the people, who consisted of different social and cultural groups seeking a "collective identity". Renan discredits the theory that race is the basis for the unification of people. It is important to note that France was quite ethnically diverse during the French Revolution, but it nevertheless managed to set the stage for nationalism. Renan also asserts that neither language nor religion are basis for solidarity because language invites people to unite, but does not force them to do so, while religion has become an individual matter (Renan, 2018: 147). Any nation-forming experience is the mixture of races, origins and religions, where conquering people often adopted the religion and manners of the people they conquered. The classical example is China during the Yuan Dynasty (Stovpets, 2020: 63).

E. Renan comes to several profound conclusions: a Nation is "a will", which is superior to language, ethnicity, and religion; a Nation is "a soul, a spiritual principle" that constitutes on the past and the present. The past contains the moments of national glory and national dishonor, the common possession of a rich legacy of historical memories. And the present consent means people's desire to continue living together, their wish to keep on making investments in the heritage they have jointly received. In other words, the Nation is a *regularity*. And the national unity rests upon common memory of past glories, and shared ambitions for future collective achievements.

E. Renan foresees that nations may leave the scene for a while, he sees the future of Europe as a confederation. He reflects on this just several decades before the First World War, when these nation-empires clash with each other in brutal massacre. Important characteristic features of the development of European nations at the beginning of the 20th century were imperialism, colonialism, authoritarianism: in Europe, there was practically no country where wasn't authoritarian regime, maybe excepting Britain, but it was imperialistic and promoted the idea of "British superiority".

On the eve, and after the First World War, nations (both old and new) disputed priority and fought for their "living space" (DE: 'Lebensraum'). Here we mean not only Germany, France, Britain, Russian Empire, but also those nations that were reborn on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire: Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Albania, etc. The Wilsonian principle of the "right of nations to self-determination" found expression in the surge of nationalism in the first half of the 20th century, when a lot of new states formed on the basis of 'national identity' suddenly appeared in Europe. The fact that it is dangerous was understood even before the First World War, since the Balkans had shown - what is the national idea in action! Having freed themselves from the power of Ottoman Turkey, the Balkan peoples immediately made the Second Balkan War (1913) between each other. And each of these nations believed that their time had come: the Bulgarians began to revive the "great Bulgaria", the Greeks - the "great Ellada", the Romanians - the "great Romania", and the Serbs - "the Great Serbia". As we know from history, that was not for a long time, as the geopolitical balance has changed after 1918.

After the Second World War, the stage of aggressive building of nation-states faded somewhat, giving way to two supranational systems - the socialistic and liberal-capitalistic. One of the hegemons, the Soviet Union, was building a supranational system. At the same time, the revival of the national cultures of the Soviet republics was imitated, while an active external work was being carried out to support national liberation movements in the colonies of the West. This ideological game of the Soviet Union, known as "national liberation movements", nowadays transformed into anti-colonialism, was a naturally disadvantageous ideology for the West (as European countries still continued to exploit the developing countries all over the world). So, on contrary, the West began to make main focus on human rights and fundamental freedoms, i.e. on universal values, which are all *above* any nation.

Conclusions

Reflections on the meaning of various works on the origins of nations as political and sociocultural structures exemplify a social-constructivist understanding of the nation. The retrospective analysis of 'national' discourse allows us to conclude that, during the recent five centuries, the humankind observes a gradual shift in the Nation concept interpretation. In the ideas of the 16th - 17th centuries, only the aristocracy represented the nation, being its intellectual, political, financial and ideological core. In the 18th century, the 'third estate' was attached to the

nation and constituted its majority. In the 19th - early 20th centuries, the concept of nation has been expanded to the whole people (any citizen regardless their social class). Although we can evaluate this intricate path that some nations have overcome, and we're even able to extract certain commonalities and general regularities, but still we cannot say clearly - what conceptually awaits the Nation in the next round of globalization.

We tend to support the position that nationhood is not an eternal concept, but changes over time. Apparently, at some point in history, regional confederations in different parts of the world will replace the nations of today, or at least will gather them into alliances based on similarity of some kind. But at the current time, however, the existence of separate nations seems reasonable, as long as this state of affairs serves to guarantee diversity and liberty, in a way which probably would be lost in the unified world without many nations. Each nation brings its uniqueness to our compound humanity.

In the context of the existential crisis that Ukraine is currently experiencing, the nation still can be that mobilizing force that helps unite people in opposition to external aggression. The principle "nation as a function" becomes primary in the geopolitical situation of Ukraine, or any nation like Ukrainians (i.e. those who have a solid historical tradition and cultural background, and long-time experience of living in a single state). In times of peace, the nation could rather be evaluated as a regularity, as an aspiration to preserve people's collective identity, with the support of shared spiritual traditions, cultural values, and social-economic benefits of being together by volition.

Another vision about the Nation's perspectives is though nowadays it seems rather stable and persistent, nevertheless, globally the concept of nation does not have enough resources to influence the world of the 21st century, like it was in the recent centuries. Even multinational, multilingual Europe relies upon common European values, not the national ones. Although probably, from time to time we will become witnesses of a short-term renaissance of the national idea, but most likely the bulk of such processes will happen in the developing countries. While in the West (USA, EU, etc.) both local people, and people who migrated and have been living there for several generations, will definitely remember their roots, will honor their traditions, will remember their motherland (or have some image of it), but mainly - they will live in a global supranational system.

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