

NATIONHOOD IN EUROPE. THE USE OF THE HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE METHOD

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Introduction

I would like to start with the statement that a social science which is worthy of the name is also an historically oriented discipline and that the historical viewpoint leads to the comparative study of societies. I am taking as a starting point that in the social sciences there is no specific method called "historical and comparative"; that any social science that aims at being a generalising discipline, that is, a discipline the objective of which is to formulate general patterns about society, is by definition historical and comparative. Why? Simply because the only way to achieve a scientific social science is through comparisons both in time and in space.

One of the key differences between the natural sciences and the social sciences is that the latter lack the experimental method. In other words, while a physicist can, in principle, repeat an experiment in the laboratory as many times as may be necessary, changing the size, weight and combination of the variables, and by so doing might be in a position to prove or disprove a given hypothesis, the social scientist in general is only given, so to speak, a variety of ready-made experiments. And these are the different societies that exist in time and space. It is only by comparing these societies, or certain aspects of them (state, nation, class, family, church, etc), that we may have the possibility of formulating scientific statements about society.

The main objective of the paper is to show how four important authors in the modern study of nationalism (Hechter, Dumont, Gellner and Hroch) approach the issue of the European reality. However, before entering the core of the subject-matter I explore rather briefly the rationale that accounts and justifies a comparative and social science. Secondly, and more importantly, I present the main recent sociological contributions to the study of the historical and comparative method.

I.- Rationale for a Comparative and Historical Social Science

Let us now consider some of the reasons that justify a comparative and historical social science:

1) *The past is in the present*

Human cultures, whether modern or traditional, European or non-European, rely heavily on references to the past to justify the present. How otherwise do you explain the Serbian nation if not by reference, among other things, to an historical tradition which started, at least as early as, in the fourteenth century (1389). We are all the product of previous generations, not only biologically but also culturally.

2) *The use of history helps us to explain the origins and development of specific social phenomena (and nations in particular), which otherwise would appear as universal and atemporal, and hence necessary*

Most social phenomena are specific to a certain time and a certain place. National identity is a particular way of shaping and organising society. It originated in England [a thesis suggested by Adrian Hastings (1997)] and spread to Western Europe in the Middle Ages; however, it became paralysed between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, but later expanded, through the American and the French Revolutions, all over Europe and the Americas and, later, the world.

Historical and comparative social science teaches us that national identity and nationalism do not derive from certain characteristics of human nature. In other words, showing that nationalism is tied to a certain period in the development of human history, and that it did not exist before, we can also show that it need not exist for ever. It is important to emphasise that, at present, we see no tendencies to the disappearance of nationalism. However, there have been regular forecastings to that end at least since 1848.

On the other hand, a great number of social scientists take national identity to be a phenomenon of modernity. A few, and I tend to agree with such a position, state that this idea appeared in the medieval period or even earlier (as the case of Israel might indicate). It should be emphasised, however, that some concepts are more general than others; without history and comparison we cannot give an answer to these issues.

3) *The social sciences emerged in a rather small corner of the world and at a particular stage of its development, while it often aspire to universalistic types of explanation*

Many social scientific theories are presented as if the generalisations that they embody are valid for all times and places, when in fact they were arrived at on the basis of limited contemporary Western experience. This is particularly true of structural-functionalism, the dominant social scientific theory of the twentieth century.

4) *The only way of knowing where we are going is by knowing where we come from*

Historical comparisons can also tell us the likely effects of social action; the price we may have to pay to achieve certain social objectives. It would be foolish to any specialist on nationalism to ignore an historical comparison, that is what happened in 1848, 1871, 1918, 1945, 1960 and 1991.

5) *A non-historical and non-comparative social science means exclusively a discipline of the here and now*

It means bracketing off human experience in space and time, and pretending that it does not affect the construction of a generalising discipline.

II.- The renewal of historical comparisons. Can anthropologists learn from a sociological perspective?

In the present approach I will attempt to find out if some modern sociologists are worth looking at on the issue of the historical and comparative method. It is a well-known fact that at the beginning of the twentieth century there was a specialisation of the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, etc.) and an abandonment of evolutionism. As Talcott Parsons put it in a rhetorical way in the 1930s: "Who now reads Spencer?" In other words, both sociology and anthropology dealt only with timeless societies and comparisons were also progressively abandoned. To be sure, there were some exceptions like Leslie White in the USA and the Marxist anthropologists of Western Europe. Incidentally, Stalin's dogmatic presentation of the "five stages theory" in *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* represented a fossilised scheme and an attempt at stultifying scientific creativity.

It is important to realise that the emergence of a fully-fledged historical and comparative sociology is a relatively recent phenomenon (the late 1960s). To be more precise, twentieth century sociology ignored history and avoided macro-comparisons and one could add that history, as a discipline, paid back with the same currency, that is, it had no theoretical interests and was only concerned with events. The fact that sociology was for a long period ahistorical and non-comparative should not blind us to the fact that from their inception in the eighteenth century, the social sciences were historical (in its evolutionary brand) and comparative.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint a single reason that accounts for the renaissance of historical sociology after 1960, there is little doubt, as Tilly has remarked, that a concern with a critique of the theories of development and modernisation, which were unable to account for underdevelopment in the Third World, led to more comparative and historical analyses. Evolutionary theory became fashionable again in anthropology and sociology. Even Parsons revived 19th century evolutionary approaches

in the light of his own theoretical developments. In 1966 he published *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives*, in which he put forward three main stages of the evolution of society: primitive, intermediate and modern. Finally, the classical tradition (Durkheim, Marx and Weber) was once again read in the light of its contributions to the historical and comparative method.

One of the first spirited defences of historical comparison in post- World War II British sociology was that of Stanislav Andreski, in his *Elements of Comparative Sociology* (1964). He highlighted the importance of Mill's Method of Agreement (a comparison of two cases which are different in every aspect but one) and the Method of Difference (a comparison of two cases which are similar in all respects but one). He was well-aware that the historical and comparative method had been misused by authors who had limited themselves to listing "resemblance with almost complete disregard of the contexts in which they occurred" (1964: 67). Andreski made two useful points that social scientists should ignore at their peril. Firstly, he suggested that practitioners should acquire some expertise in the neighbouring disciplines. Secondly, he insisted that some social scientists should be generalists.

Another early influential book is that by Przeworski and Teune (1970). These authors are essentially concerned with the units of comparison. Should countries or states be "interpreted as residua of variables —that which is not accounted for by a theory?" (1970: 132) If this is the case, the comparative and historical method is unlikely to be of much use in the area of theory-testing. The problem with many social scientists, according to Przeworski and Teune, is that they offer explanations that are often couched in terms of differences between social systems (countries, states); this they see as a defeatist attitude. "When systems differ", they insist, "we must search for the system-level variables that create these differences and continue to do so until all empirical remedies are exhausted" (*ibidem*: 134).

It would appear that at the simplest level the historical and comparative method involves at least *two societies*. It has been suggested that classical studies such as Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and Durkheim's *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* can hardly be excluded from the comparative range, because at the limit they are implicitly comparative (Ragin 1987: 4). Another important issue is to clarify the unit of study, and by that it is usually meant a society (i.e. a state or a subdivision of a state). This is what Przeworski and Teune (1970) call the 'level of analysis' and Ragin (1987) the 'explanatory unit'. Of course, authors like Wallerstein maintain that the unit of study is not the state but the world-system.

Contemporary authors have also been sensitive to the question of how comparable very different types of societies are, for example an industrial and a non-industrial

one, or a Christian and a Muslim society. These are not issues that can be ignored, except when the aims of the comparison are rather limited. As a consequence of that even the researcher who focuses on contemporary societies will find that the number of comparable cases may be rather small, and this precludes the use of statistical methods. Nonetheless, explanations can still be forthcoming if the variables are properly manipulated. In any case, the comparative method is used to discern the varied configurations that are the cause of particular social phenomena.

It is possible to show how classical social scientists proceeded when the number of societies was very small. A case in point is that of Tocqueville in the aforementioned study of America. He noted that "Americans are connected with English by their origin, their religion, their language and partially by their customs; they differ only in their social condition. It may therefore be inferred that the reserve of the English proceeds from the constitution of their country much more than from that of its inhabitants" (Tocqueville 1990, 2: 170). In any case, single case studies, no matter how successful they are in generating hypotheses and even when they rely on implicit comparisons, have limited reliability because they exclude control. Of course, a time dimension in a case study can change the circumstances, converting it practically into a multiple case study.

In practice most comparative and historical studies fall into two categories: *either* in depth analysis of a few cases (fewer than five) *or* statistical cross-national analysis (up to the number of existing states). It is often suggested that social scientists who have intensive, hermeneutical, particularising interests will tend to compare at most two or three cases, while those interested in extensive, scientific, generalising concerns will tend to adopt a quantitative, cross-national perspective involving many cases.

Some social scientists have adopted an intermediate position and have tried to account, causally, for societal developments, while preserving the complexity of the cases under consideration. According to Skocpol and Sommers (1980), this type of studies tend to move back and forward between different explanatory hypotheses and detailed comparisons of the important dimensions of the cases under consideration. The fact that by definition this type of analysis works with a limited number of cases, means that it can only approximate the reliability of the statistical approach. As we shall see below in some detail, Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966), which involves the consideration of eight cases, is perhaps the best example of this type of pursuit.

Finally, approaches that see the world in global terms (for example, Wallerstein's world-systems theory) try to escape from the idea that the unit of comparison is the state. Some critics (Badie 1992) have pointed out that the most generalising type of

strategies fails to provide a proper scientific explanation because of the difficulty of verifying the proposed hypotheses. Generally speaking, although the comparative and historical method is not as reliable as the experimental method of the natural sciences, it is the only substitute that the social sciences can muster.

It is now time to return to John Stuart Mill. Most contemporary authors, both comparative historians and methodologists, refer to and make use of two of Mill's methods: the Method of Agreement and the Method of Difference. In his seminal book *The Comparative Method* (1987), Ragin states that "most discussions of case-oriented methods begin (and often end) with John Stuart Mill's presentation of experimental enquiry in *A System of Logic*" (1987: 36).

The *Method of Agreement* is very popular in the social sciences, particularly among those who focus on a single case study. The task of the research is to eliminate possible causes of a phenomenon by showing instances in which although the outcome is present, all the hypothesised antecedents but one are not. This cause would be considered the crucial one. Of course, there is always the danger that there might be a hidden cause that the comparison has missed. In the Method of Difference a contrast is established between two sets of cases: the first in which both cause and effect are present; the second in which both cause and effect are absent, although other circumstances would be similar. Both Mill and modern researchers agree that the latter method is more powerful and reliable than the former one.

Ragin (1987: 36-9) mentions the example of peasant revolts as a fertile area for the *Method of Agreement*. In the literature on this topic we can find a number of potential causes for peasant revolts: a powerful middle peasantry, a landless peasantry, quick agricultural commercialisation, and traditionalism. Let us assume that all these four antecedents appear in a given case study. It is the task of the investigator to find other cases of peasant revolts in that one or more of the antecedents are absent. If the researcher is successful in finding cases in which peasant revolts are present but say traditionalism, a powerful middle peasantry and a landless peasantry are absent, then the only cause left —rapid commercialisation of agriculture— is the determining one.

Using the same example, with the *Method of Difference* we would first establish a series of instances of peasant societies in which revolts had occurred and see that they did correlate with the antecedent of rapid commercialisation of agriculture. In a second move we would look a peasant societies in which both the effect and the cause were absent, that is, neither peasant revolts nor rapid commercialisation of agriculture existed. This double demonstration would strongly support the initial hypothesis that the cause of peasant revolts is the rapid commercialisation of agriculture.

Some attempts have been made by Tilly (1984; 1990) to systematise the different comparative and historical approaches used by social scientists. In his *Big Structures, Large Processes and Huge Comparisons* (1984) Tilly distinguished four types of comparison: the *individualising* (exemplified in the work of Reinhardt Bendix), the *generalising* or variation-finding (exemplified in the work of Walter Rostow), the *inclusive* or encompassing (exemplified in the work of Barrington Moore) and the *universalising* (exemplified in the work of Immanuel Wallerstein). These types are the result of combining two different dimensions: scope and number. Scope refers to the issue of whether the emphasis is placed on the particular (every characteristic of the case study) or on the general (characteristics of all the cases studied). Number refers to the question of whether the comparison entails a single or many forms of a phenomenon.

According to Tilly, "a purely individualising comparison treats each case as unique, taking up one instance at a time, and minimising its common properties with other instances. A pure universalising comparison [...] identifies common properties among all instances of a phenomenon" (1984: 81). The generalising or variation-finding perspective "establishes a principle of variation in the character or intensity of a phenomenon by examining systematic differences among instances" (1984: 2). Finally, the inclusive or encompassing type of comparison "places different instances at various locations within the same system, on the way to explaining their characteristics as a function of their varying relationships to the system as a whole" (1984: 83).

In his more recent work Tilly distinguishes four levels in which historical and comparative sociology can operate:

- 1.- *Metahistorical*: "attempting to identify patterns in all human existence".
- 2.- *World-Systemic*: "tracing the succession of world- systems, the largest connected sets of human interaction".
- 3.- *Macrobistorical*: "examining large-scale structures and processes within world-systems".
- 4.- *Microhistorical*: "studying the experiences of individuals and well-defined groups within the limits set by large-scale structures and processes" (1990: 112-13).

To recapitulate. From a recent sociological approach the historical and comparative method is first and foremost for checking, for controlling whether generalisations are correct, that is, whether they are compatible with the evidence from the case studies under consideration. There exist other controls like the experimental method and the statistical method; unfortunately the former is difficult to apply to the social world, while the latter requires many cases which do not always exist.

In historical comparisons it is obvious that it does not make much sense to contrast either identical or totally different entities. To establish the comparability of two given entities a decision has to be made after a preliminary analysis of the cases. As Sartori (1991: 246-8) has pointed out a number of traps await the inexperienced researcher: parochialism (ignorance of wider research), misclassification (creation of false categories), degreeism (excessive use of the idea of continuum) and concept-stretching (the use of vague categories).

We have seen that the historical and comparative method ranges from the analysis of a single case (in which the comparison is implicit) to studies in which a few cases are considered (perhaps the most popular option) and cross-national comparisons which may involve many cases. Of course, a number of sociologists believe that, because of the incommensurability of concepts, only single, totalising and hermeneutically-oriented case studies make sense. Nonetheless, the experience of the past thirty years shows that a growing number of social scientists have come to the conclusion that generalisations are the *raison d'être* of sociology as a discipline, and that they cannot be arrived at except by the judicious and creative use of the historical and comparative method.

Finally, it is possible to affirm that in the area of historically-grounded, comparative studies there is no doubt that the contemporary sociologist who has made the most lasting impact is Barrington Moore. His major opus, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (originally published in 1966), is perhaps the single most important text of historical sociology and one of the most influential books on the making of the modern world. Moore distinguishes three routes to the modern world: 1) Bourgeois revolutions; 2) Conservative revolutions from above (fascist revolutions); 3) Peasant revolutions (communist revolutions). Moore's goal is:

"To understand the role of the landed upper classes and the peasants in the bourgeois revolutions leading to capitalist democracy, the abortive bourgeois revolutions leading to fascism, and the peasant revolutions leading to communism. The ways in which the landed upper classes and the peasants reacted to the challenge of commercial agriculture were decisive factors in determining the political outcome" (Moore 1968: XIV).

Although Moore envisaged these revolutions as different alternative modes of modernisation, in fact he saw them more clearly as successive historical stages. Each revolution had different costs and achievements; in general, revolutions were the preconditions for a freer and more rational world.

III.- Four important authors who study nationalism in Europe - are they really historically and comparatively oriented ?

III.1. Preface

It is easy to remember that, in the not so distant past, most anthropologists believed in the idea of an anthropology of the Mediterranean. Such a category, as is (or it should be) well-known, suggested that Southern Europe (East and West), North-Africa (East and West) and a few Middle Eastern countries were part of the same entity. The 1970s were still a period in which if we compare European anthropology with Mediterranean anthropology it is clear that the second dominates as a theoretical framework. A classical example from a comparative perspective is the one provided by John Davis' *People of the Mediterranean* (1977). This was undoubtedly an important contribution, with its greatness the presentation of a rich gathering and comparison of ethnographies and its weakness, the assumption that the comparison of distant realities would be fruitful. One important thing, however, cannot be denied concerning Davis's approach: it was a serious attempt to compare. He was well aware that most anthropologists "failed in their plain duty to be comparative and to produce even the most tentative proposition concerning concomitant variations" (1977: 55).

However, some anthropologists were doubtful of the category "Mediterranean", maintaining rather the idea of a Southwestern European unity and positing that the parallelisms suggested between the Northwestern Mediterraneans and the Southwestern ones were rather superficial and in any case limited to the period of the Roman Empire. The late 1980s were a period in which the idea of an anthropology of the Mediterranean was subjected to discussion and criticism (Llobera 1986). By the 1990s, it progressively made its appearance in a different, new framework: an anthropology of Europe (MacDonald 1993; Goddard et al. 1994). My intention is only to mention this occurrence, but not to try to explain its rationale, though it is a well-known fact that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the development of the European Union were undoubtedly the two most important causal factors.

If we look at the 1980s we can observe that the framework of 'Europe' appears in the anthropological literature. A couple of examples will suffice. In 1984 Hans Vermeulen and Jeremy Boissevain edited a book entitled *Ethnic Challenge. The Politics of Ethnicity on Europe*. Most part of the chapters focus on case-studies (the Welsh, the Catalans, the Gypsies in England, the Occitans, the Lapps, etc) and some limited comparisons: Levy and Hechter (Scotland, Wales and Brittany), Cole (South Tyrol and Transylvania) and Heiberg (Mediterranean Europe). In Boissevain's short 'Preface' it

is clearly mentioned that a number of Eastern European anthropologists also made contributions to the original symposium which took place in Amsterdam in 1981. Their papers, he said, "were lively" (1984: 5) but they could not be included in the volume for "various reasons" (*ibidem*).

Europe Observed, a book edited by João Pina-Cabral and John Campbell, was published in 1992, though the papers were presented at a 1986 Congress that took place in Portugal. As expected, the book had nothing on Eastern Europe. In fact, the chapters were all concerned (with the exception of England) with Mediterranean Europe, including Greece. In the 'Preface' the idea of the Mediterranean is practically abandoned. It is clear that, with some limited exceptions, the Anthropology of the Mediterranean had come to an end. I should perhaps mention the fact that a revival of such an endeavour can be found in a recent and bi-lingual large volume edited by Albera, Blok and Bromerger entitled, once again, *Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (2001). The editors, of course, are really aware that their task is, to say the least, uphill and arduous.

III.2. *Comparing Authors*

In the context of my concern with nationhood in Europe, it is my intention to bring together and compare four major authors: Michael Hechter, Louis Dumont, Ernst Gellner and Miroslav Hroch. My purpose is to offer different approaches to the study of nationalism within the European framework and to see to which extent any of these authors provides us with a comparative and historical perspective. It is no surprise to observe that not all the authors referred to are anthropologists. This refers, of course, to Hechter, who is a sociologist, and to Hroch—who is an historian. As to Gellner, it is well-known that his approach was multifaceted (philosophy, sociology, anthropology, ethnography, history and philosophy). Finally, Louis Dumont was certainly not a run-of-the-mill anthropologist and can be considered as somebody who attempted to come to terms with the history of Western European ideas.

III.2.1. *Michael Hechter*

If we begin with Michael Hechter's approach to the issue that concerns us what we have to examine is his latest book entitled *Containing Nationalism* (2000). At one level the book displays what could be called a high level of generality. It is a perspective which aims at offering a theoretical viewpoint on nationalism at a world-level. The European reality is examined and discussed, but as part of what, superficially, appears

as a wider framework. In practice, however, the book focuses more on Europe than on any other reality, though chapter six presents a brief comparison of three American countries —Quebec (1940), Aruba and the USA (1970)— which illustrates "the importance of the cultural division of labour on nationalism" (Hechter 2000: 192).

It is obvious that, although not fully elaborate, Hechter distinguishes between Western and Eastern Europe. The former is characterised by nationalisms which are "liberal and culturally inclusive" and the latter by nationalisms which are "illiberal and culturally exclusive" (*ibidem*: 15). The way to explain the radical differences between nationalisms is to formulate a typology. He puts forward five types:

- 1.- State-building nationalism (England, France).
- 2.- Peripheral nationalism (Scotland and Catalonia as failures, and Ireland and Norway as successes).
- 3.- Irredentist nationalism (Sudeten Germans).
- 4.- Unification nationalism (Germany, Italy).
- 5.- Patriotism (raising power and prestige of one's nation state).

It is obvious from this typology that it really refers to Western Europe. Looking at peripheral nationalism there is a treatment of the Ottoman Empire, with a detailed analysis of its Eastern European dimension. Yugoslavia is also considered as part of the issue of decentralisation and fragmentation. It cannot be said, however, that his analysis is convincing when the main rationale for the collapse of Yugoslavia is blamed on "Germany's recognition of Slovenia and Croatia" (*ibid*: 151). Although a more complex framework is offered to account for the events, no reference is made to Serbia's centralising and oppressive policies which emerged in the late 1980s. It is interesting to compare Hechter's treatment of the Yugoslav issue with the well-balanced and instructive presentation by Adrian Hastings in *The Construction of Nationhood* (1997). On the whole, I was somewhat surprised that Hechter's book was hailed by leading social scientists like Charly Tilly, John Hall and Alexander Motyl as a major theoretical contribution to the study of nationalism. At the risk of being outspoken, my conviction is that Hechter's typology of nationalism is certainly not new or exciting and his analysis is often simplistic and biased.

III.3.2. Louis Dumont

Louis Dumont was engaged, after spending 25 years researching Indian society, in a second stage of his anthropological theorisation by focusing on modern European

ideology. He offered, among other things, a comparative and historical study of modern European ideology. He offered, among other things, a comparative and historical study of nationalist ideologies, with particular emphasis on Germany, and subsidiarily France. There was not theory of nationalism in general or limited to Western Europe in the two key books that he published — *Essays on Individualism* (1986) and *German Ideology from France to Germany and Back* (1994). The objective of his texts was anthropological-philosophical, a study of national character.

Perhaps one of the outstanding features of Dumont's work is his distinction between a German and a French conception of the nation. According to the former, being German is essential and being human is accidental. For the latter, the individual is by nature a human being and being a French person is accidental. Although the author does not explore this issue, it is implicit in other thinkers with the objective of distinguishing between Western individuality (originating in France) and Eastern European conception of the nation (originating in Germany).

Dumont insisted on the comparative (and historical one could say) character of his enterprise; the principles that he used to understand Germany —the predominance of holism, the idea of universal sovereignty and the introverted individualism of the Reformation— were determined in the long run. His analysis of Germany, insisted Dumont, was the result of using a French viewpoint —and that gave a comparative character to the enterprise. On the other hand, a return to France after the German expedition allowed the author to project categories into a French screen. Of course, it could also be said that the contrast between France and Germany was not particularly original because it reiterated the classical distinction, first coined by Friedrich Meinecke at the beginning of the twentieth century, between the political and the cultural conception of the nation respectively. On the other hand, Dumont admitted that in the late nineteenth century the French moved towards a more cultural view of the nation.

One criticism that could be addressed to Dumont's perspective is that he focused exclusively on an extremely small and selective sample of German high culture texts (Herder, Fichte, Troeltsch, Mann). Here I would like to point out that the absence of treatment of the popular (Volkish) German culture, with its specific emphasis on racial and social darwinistic ideas, offers a poor vision of what culminated in Nazi Germany. Another area open to criticism is the extent to which Dumont's writings on Germany are "Franco-centric", often presenting rather dark colours.

III.3.3. Ernst Gellner

In one of his last contributions to the question of nationalism, Ernst Gellner recognised that his theory of nationalism was somewhat Eurocentric, although he considered the development of nationalism at the global level. An issue concerning Gellner, in spite of a couple of chapters (six and seven) on European nationalism in his posthumously published book *Nationalism* (1997), was his level of abstraction. Generally speaking, his work on nationalism appeared as ahistorical because he tended to work with ideal-types. There is also a clear tendency to economic reductionism and the conviction that nationalism in Europe was an exclusive phenomenon of modernity and industrialisation. Gellner insisted that nations were invented (a position shared by all modernists); this idea has been extremely attractive to many social scientists because it confirmed the generalised perception that nationalism is best explained in a reductionist fashion.

Ignoring the fact that state-generated nationalism is an important explanatory framework is also a serious limitation of Gellner's theory. On the other hand, and perhaps not surprisingly, he had little to say about national sentiments and consciousness. In this respect, one could only insist that his sociological structuralism was oblivious to history, even if some reference is made to it. Later in his life, Gellner was aware that the explanatory power of his theories about nationalism in Europe was comprehensive, but not exhaustive. Among other things that they did not account for was the virulence of fascist nationalism(s) or the existence of ethnonationalisms in Western Europe.

My brief presentation of Gellner's theory of nationalism may appear as somewhat critical, and I have emphasised in my own past writings that a major problem with his modernist conception of nationalism is that it minimises the ethnic roots of the nations—a perspective that Anthony Smith has also highlighted. An interesting question that can be raised with respect to Gellner is whether there is any major change from his book *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) to his *Nationalism*, written twenty years later. An interesting change that could be mentioned is that between his original acceptance of a dual division of Europe between Eastern and Western nationalism, proposed, he said, by John Plamenatz in 1973, and his more recent idea that Europe is divided in four zones from the West to the East. One should recall that Plamenatz's distinction (undoubtedly similar to Hans Kohn's distinction between civic and ethnic nationalism) emphasises that the Western type of nationalism is nice, democratic and rational and the Eastern one is nasty, irrational and ethnic. In practice, however, the opposition between West and East still predominates in so far as zones 1 and 2 are clearly separated from zones 3 and 4, which are definitely referred to by Gellner as a single eastern Europe—a zone

where "trouble really starts" (1997: 54). It is interesting to mention that in an impressive book —*Eastern European Nationalism in the 20th Century* (1995)— the editor, Peter Sugar, has emphasised a number of differences between Western and Eastern nationalisms. The main features of Eastern European nationalism are the following:

- 1) Integral nationalism (absolute loyalty of the individual).
- 2) Pessimistic nationalism (tied to political and military defeats).
- 3) Self-identification (identity being essential).
- 4) Non-drastic and economic and social changes.
- 5) Defensive character.
- 6) Populist myths.
- 7) Lack of coinciding ethnic, ethnonationalistic, linguistic and political borders (Sugar 1995: 417-19).

In a variety of texts published by Gellner in the 1990s, he referred to *five stages* in the development of nationalism within the framework of the industrialised world; this he called stages of transition. The *first* stage was labelled the Age of the Dynasty or the Viennese Situation. To be more precise, it can also be known as protonationalism because the decisions taken in Vienna in 1815 by the Western European states were not based on ethnicity. The *second* stage is known as the Age of National Irredentism. For a hundred years there is a process of creating one nation-one state with not much success —particularly in Eastern Europe. The *third* stage is called Irredentism or Nationalism Triumphant and Self-Defeating or the Age of Versailles and Wilson and corresponds to 1918, following World War I. The principle of self-determination applied under Wilson's name was rather "fragile and feeble" (*ibid*: 44) and it collapsed in the long run. There followed a *fourth* stage under the name of Ethnic Cleansing or fascist nationalism under the expression of "Bei Nacht und Nebel". It simply consisted of mass murder and/or forcible deportation, during World War II and after, of those who did not belong to the same nation (biologically, culturally, linguistically, etc.). The final, *fifth*, stage is denoted "Attenuation of National feelings or of Ethnic Hatred". It is arguable how real this stage is, because as Gellner suggested it "is in part wish-fulfilment" (*ibidem*: 47). What was meant is that there is to a certain extent a coincidence between Eastern and Western Europe. No doubt, as we shall see, Gellner was well-aware that he was working with ideal types and that his inspiration was the result of generalising on his Central European experience.

Gellner stated that presenting a five-stage sequence was not sufficient because in Europe one could detect four time zones from the West to the East. Each zone is

supposed to go through all the stages. As it happened, communism "froze" the nationalistic development of some of the zones (three and particularly four). According to Gellner, *zone 1*, referred to as the 'Atlantic' and including Portugal, Spain, France, England and Scandinavia, was an area where each state was culturally and linguistically more or less homogeneous. When the Age of Nationalism appeared no changes were required. *Zone 2*, known as the Holy Roman Empire, corresponded to the realities of Germany and Italy which, as is well-known, reached unification by the late nineteenth century. As to *zone 3*, which corresponds to Central Europe and the Hapsburg Balkans, it was a troublesome area, where violence and brutality took place. The fact of life is that in this area "there were neither national states nor national cultures" (ibid: 54); both features had to be created from nearly *ex nihilo*. This affected parts of the Austrian, Ottoman and Russian empires. The last area, *zone 4*, is in fact part of Eastern Europe. It is presented as the area which was controlled by Russian communism from the twenties and expanded from 1945 to 1989. During this period nationalism was contained, but after 1989 ethnic cleansing appeared in some places (particularly in the ex-Yugoslavia).

I would suggest that what we have in Gellner's scheme, combining stages and zones, is a rough and tumble guide to the past two hundred years of European history. At this stage, one could say that the transition from ethnic to nation is not considered by Gellner because it would require a temporal perspective which would take him to the Middle Ages. Generally speaking, one must assert that both his evolutionary and geographic ideal types are rather rigid, and although they account for some cases, they leave out a *lot* of anomalies. If we take into account the Atlantic zone, we can observe that there is a disregard for historical facts, as when we are told that this area has not been much affected by nationalism (Ireland excepted). The truth of the matter is that this was not an area mostly bereft of "ethnographic nationalism". This is undoubtedly true of Portugal, but it is not applicable to Spain (Basques and Catalans), the United Kingdom (Scots and Welsh) even France (Corsicans today). As to Scandinavia, how about the independence of Norway from Sweden at the beginning of the 20th century?). I do not want to extend my criticism any further. I conclude, however, that Gellner's ideal types, if that is what they are meant to be, not history, are rather ill-constructed.

III.3.4. Miroslav Hroch

As early as 1969 and 1971, respectively, Miroslav Hroch published two books on European nationalism. The first one was entitled *Die Vorkämpfer der nationalen Bewegung*

bei den kleinen Völkern Europas. Eine vergleichende Analyse zur gesellschaftlichen Schichtung der patriotischen Gruppen. The second book was *The Revival of the Small European Nations in Northern and Eastern Europe*. In the texts, Hroch combines theory and history, as well as presenting a comparison between seven patriotic groups of small nations: Norwegians, Czechs, Finns, Estonians, Lithuanians, Slovaks, Flemish and Danes of Schleswig.

Hroch distinguished three phases of national development:

- A) The scholarly phase, in which a small elite begins the study of language, culture and history.
- B) The national agitation phase, during which patriots outside the elites are mobilised.
- C) The mass national movements phase.

Hroch emphasised also the importance of the following significant markers:

- 1) The social profile and territorial distribution of leading patriots and activists.
- 2) The role of language as symbol and vehicle of identification.
- 3) The place of the theatre, music and folklore in the national movement.
- 4) The salience of civil rights as a demand.
- 5) The importance of human awareness.
- 6) The position of the school system and the spread of literacy.
- 7) The participation of the churches and the influence of religion.
- 8) The contribution of women as activists and as symbols.

What has to be remembered about these schemes, is that they were formulated long before the emergence of the main theories of nationalism which was in the early 1980s. In an article published by Hroch in the *New Left Review* (1993, 198: 3-20) he stated that comparative studies of Phase C had not taken place though they were badly needed. In fact, we know little of the social groups mobilised and of the cultural, political and social aspirations in the national programmes. Missing as well are the comparisons of the social physiognomy of the leading patriots, that is, the national intelligentsias. Hroch himself offered a comparison of the Czech, Polish, Slovak and German intellectuals. Finally, one could mention the fact that a comparison between Eastern and Western Europe is absent.

In one of his most recent books, *In the National Interest* (2000), Hroch produces a comparative perspective of national movements in nineteenth century Europe. For

peculiar reasons I have access only to two chapters: one on the linguistic programs and the other on the issue of self-determination. One important thing that the author emphasises concerning the first topic, is something that only a comparative approach can provide: that language, in spite of the fact that it is often thought, it is not always, although often it might be, the cause of nationalism —as the cases of Ireland, Norway, Greece, Scotland and Serbia clearly show.

More specifically in relation to the main issue he distinguishes five stages of linguistic development in the European framework. There is, *first* of all, an exaltation and defence of the language. French is state-supported already in the sixteenth century and German, Czech, Slovak and Greek among others by the end of the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century many languages are exalted and became an important element of the nationalist movements (Catalan, Finnish, Basque, etc). The *second* stage consists of linguistic planning and codification. This was an essential part of cultural standardising. This happened to most of the languages defended in the first stage. The *third* stage represents the intellectualisation of the national language through books, journals, periodicals, etc. all over Europe. During the *fourth* stage the language is introduced in schools. The state reaction to the demand of schooling a non-official language varied from country to country, France being particularly negative. The *fifth* and last stage can be referred to as the accomplishment of a complete equality of languages within a state. In fact, no states were in favour of a total linguistic equality of their languages, excepting perhaps Switzerland.

Generally speaking, Hroch is modest about his contribution, which he believes is the formation of small nations (which he now calls "non-dominant ethnic groups"). However, I would emphasise that the use of the comparative method is an important innovation in the area of nationalist studies. In spite of the fact that Gellner criticised Hroch's so called Marxism, Hroch was quite sympathetic to Gellner and insisted that there were no major differences between them. I personally think that this is more a proof of Hroch's generosity than anything else.

Conclusion

In an article published some years ago, Bruce Kapferer stated that "nationalism is a particularly interesting phenomenon [...] because it displays extreme cultural self-consciousness" and that "the comparative examination of nationalism should be extent to a critical understanding of anthropological practice itself" (1989: 193). Kapferer seemed to be inclined to emphasise Dumont's idea that some nationalisms are egalitarian and others hierarchical. But this brings us to the issue of whether the study of

nationalist ideology as Dumont emphasised is sufficient, particularly, as we have seen in a study of his work, that his approach is so selective and limited.

On the other hand, I am of the conviction that a serious comparative and historical perspective should not be an approach as superficial and biased as that of Hechter or as schematic and simplistic as that of Gellner. For starters, one should not only study ideologies well, but also the structures, movements and leaders of nationalism in the modern period as Hiroch tries to do. But prior to that one should look at the origins of national identity as Hastings (1997) has done recently. Is it the case that national identity appeared for the first time in medieval England and then it spread to Western Europe? Here is where it is also relevant to focus on the transition from ethnies to nations, that is, the requisite is to present a temporal perspective, emphasising the modernity of the nation and the antiquity of the ethnie, and how the latter was transformed into the former. These two approaches can be named, respectively, genesis and evolution. Finally, I would also mention a rather unexplored area: that which puts forward an understanding of the collective feelings or sentiments of national identity along with the concomitant elements of consciousness. Here I believe that the appropriate scientific perspectives that can help us are, as you might suspect and disapprove, psychology and sociobiology.

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SUMMARY

The starting point of this paper is the idea that in order to generalise about nationhood in Europe one must use the historical and comparative method. After a theoretical introduction about the rationale of such a methodological approach for the social sciences in general and anthropology in particular, the paper compares Gellner, Dumont, Hechter and Hroch in relation to their studies of nationalism in Europe. Finally, the article concludes emphasising the limitations of these authors in relation to the scientific objectives of constituting a general vision of the nation in Europe.

RESUM

El punt de partida d'aquest article és la idea de que a fi de generalitzar sobre el nacionalisme a Europa cal emprar el mètode històric i comparatiu. Després d'una introducció teòrica sobre la racionalitat d'aquest enfocament metodològic per a les ciències socials en general i en particular per l'antropologia, aquest article compara Gellner, Dumont, Hechter i Hroch amb relació als seus estudis sobre nacionalisme a Europa. Finalment, l'article conclou emfasitzant les limitacions d'aquests autors respecte als objectius científics de constituir una visió general de la nació a Europa.