

# DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN POSTMODERN SOCIETY

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**Abstract—** The concept of national identity is closely related to the terms nation, nationalism and citizenship. Within the boundaries elimination impacted by globalization in today's society, the nation-state is no longer the singular unit of political power with absolute sovereignty. The nation will unconsciously adopt an external culture, language or paradigm. Moreover, the external factors will impact to the concept of the nation. Due to the changes, the notion of national identity is said to need re-conceptualization. The common understanding that the modernist premises of the national state have been eroded; the concept of citizenship that has had a long symbiotic existence with the nation state also needs to be rethought. Moreover, cosmopolitanism is mentioned to represent a logical accommodation of the postmodern challenges to citizenship. The number of social contacts with foreigners will contribute more to an increased awareness of the society's national identity or cultural diversity that offered a contribution to a realization of us being cosmopolitan. Consequently, the individual's identity then becomes multiple and transnationalist, in that it promotes an active citizenry that is empowered within a global civil society

**Keywords—** National Identity, Postmodern Society, Nation, Nationalism, Cosmopolitan Society, Multiple National Identity, Trans-nationalist, Global Civil Society.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Identity definition becomes more complex especially considering all the controversies and contributions of the many broad debates within the context of post-modernity. Post-modern society itself according to David Lyon (1999) is dominated by two realities: (1) the rise of new media technologies; and (2) the dominance of consumerism in society. The combination of these unstable factors caused identity to be foregrounded as a question that cannot easily answer how society defines the term. This is both a source of exhilaration (we are free to construct ourselves) and anxiety (we really do not know who we are at the deepest level). The reality is not reflected in our understanding of it but is

constructed by our own understanding of our personal reality. Postmodernists stress that facts are simply interpretations, that truth is not absolute but merely the construct of individual groups, and that all knowledge is mediated by culture and language (Barrett, 1997).

In the definition of identity, two conflicting components namely its old elements and historical roots along with the elements of current events and future changes must be considered (Babran, 2008). According to Hall (1990: p. 225), identities are never formed in the singular and always in a process: 'far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power' (cf. Macdonald, 2011). Even though historical roots and local society culture play important roles in the development of identity, in the current society, a person's identity is being part of the global identity influenced by globalization, mass media and the elimination of country boundaries. Globalization has been said to sweep through the world's diverse cultures, destroying stable localities, displacing peoples, bringing a market-driven, 'branded' homogenization of cultural experience, thus obliterating the differences between locality-defined cultures which had constituted our identities (Tomlinson, 2003).

Postmodern, in turn, is affected by the sociological theory including an identity concept. Based on the postmodern perspective, there is a reconceptualization of class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality as identity assemblages, rather than social structures (Wurguft, 1995). Identity is regarded to be socially organized, reorganized, constructed, co-constructed, and continually reconstructed through language and discourse (Kouhpaenejad and Gholaminejad, 2014). In post-modern perspective at present, identity is no longer a given, but an open question. Postmodernists claim that modernity leads to social practices and institutions that legitimate domination and control by a powerful few over the many. Postmodernists such as Lyotard criticize modernity by citing the suffering and misery of peasant under monarchies, and later the oppression

of workers under capitalist industrialization, the exclusion of women from the public sphere, the colonization of other lands by imperialists and, ultimately, the destruction of indigenous people (Barrett, 1997). Therefore, within the post-modern point of view, the idea of identity is not passively conducted through authoritative parties, but by society actively forming the discourse.

Within the post-modern view, identity consists of two pillars: identifier and identified. Individual is subjected to be identified as a 'self', and the society is the main identifier as an 'other', it is an alterity, otherness and an ambiguous notion which gets its meaning from what it is not, from the 'other' as Derrida argued: "All identities can possibly exist with their 'difference' (with an "a")" (İnaç and Ünal, 2013). The perspective means that identity is dependent on society to forge their difference. The notion of identity also gains such implications in its meaning in the post-modern society, which make a particular connection between identity and difference (or in another specifically post-modern articulation: the alterity) and the activity (Štrajn, 2016). Because the identity means to the 'other', it is defined, determined and nominated by the 'other' (İnaç and Ünal, 2013). Therefore, identity has two components of correlation and individuality. Through the interaction of an individual with his/her society, the individual constantly receives input from the environment and at the same time possesses his/her unique characteristics of identity, which differentiates his/her independence from social pluralism.

There are many factors that influence the form of self-identity and how people describe their self-identity. Kuo and Margalit (2012) explain that some people describe themselves by their nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, or occupation. The socialization process of a person in a plurality of people, groups, social confrontations, mutual challenges and profound interactions may lead to the creation of the newly constructed identities. Individuals define their identities along two dimensions, beside individual/self-identity that distinguish an individual from others; individuals also defined by membership in various social groups, described as a social identity that provides status and enhances (or not) self-esteem (Howard, 2000). The continuity of the process will lead to a permanent character in the identity values as well (İnaç & Ünal, 2013). In other words, between the two, they are not easily separable.

Multiple identity concepts allow the minority to appear and take part in the formation of identity; that there is no universal identity and every construct identity believed as the truth. Postmodernists stress that facts are simply interpretations, that truth is not absolute but merely the construct of individual groups, and that all knowledge is mediated by culture and language (Barrett, 1997). The person as a character is not separable from his/her life experiences. Identity as explained by Taylor (1995) is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of the others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or compatible picture of themselves (cf. İnaç & Ünal, 2013). The way that the concept come to this multiplicity is through the collective

influences of various social factors, including language, geography, family, education and government.

### **Nation and Nationalism**

A discourse on national identity always connected with an idea of nation and nationalism. There are three issues reoccur in the discussion on nation and nationalism, first ethical and philosophical issues, second anthropological and political issues and third, historical and sociological issues (Vanderwerf, 2009). The issues involves the discourse of community, their relations to each others, ethnocultural character, the common history, shared language, shared ties and culture, territory and citizenship rights (.ibid). Anthony D. Smith argues that people in the beginning was local, centered on their clan, tribe, village or region, which within the development of communication and education began to develop sense of collective cultural identity that is led to the nation emergence. The nation is "a named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs" (Smith: 2002, p. 15). Nation according to Smith, created through the ethnicity negotiation among the members. Milton Esman also argues the similar view on the nation concept that is highlight the ethnicity. Esman argues that nation differentiate into ethnic community explains as a group of people with the same shared culture, religions and nation sentiment; and ethnic nation which a politicized ethnic community whose define their self in territorial homeland (Esman, 1994).

On the other hand, Ernest Gellner also gives an emphasis on the relations between community and its political elites, however, Gellner said that nations is a result of modern society condition. Gellner explain that nations is a new form of social organization as a result of modern conditions such as industry, literacy, education systems, mass communication and protected by the state (Gellner 1983, cf. Vanderwerf, 2009). Meanwhile, a nation on postmodern perspective, writes Anderson, is imagined political community because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson, 2006). He also mentioned that the community is sovereign and no matter how big the imagined community, there is always territory limit that separates the nations to another nations. The members of the community will imagining their nations, that community actively builds the concept of nation, that a nation is a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group (Ibid.).

Meanwhile, the term nationalism is simply used to describe an emotional attachment to one's nation (Vanderwerf, 2009). However, nationalism is not a natural awakening of the existing notion but the invention of the new one (Anderson, 2006). Smith describe that the term of nationalism can signify in several ways:

"(1) the whole process of forming and maintaining nations or nation-states; (2) a consciousness of belonging to the nation, together with sentiments and aspirations for its security and prosperity; (3) a language and symbolism of the 'nation'

and its role; (4) an ideology, including a cultural doctrine of nations and the national will and prescriptions for the realization of national aspirations and the national will; (5) a social and political movement to achieve the goals of the nation realize its national will” (Smith, 1991: p. 72).

Smith, due to the definition mentioned above, underlines on society agreement in form the nation through their language, symbol, ideology, social and political movement. He define that nationalism as “an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential nation” (Smith, 1991: p. 73).

Nationalism rooted from the community cultural system even though the members of the community do not know each other; their togetherness arise within the construction of the imagined community becomes a basis of nationalism (Anderson, 2006).

In general nationalism differentiates between two ways of structuring society in a nation- state, first ethnic nationalism, and second, civil nationalism. Ethnic nationalism defines the nation in ethnic terms and excludes from the nation anyone who is not a member of the same ethnic group; however, civic nationalism defines the nation on a territorial basis (Vanderwerf, 2009). Furthermore, in contemporary approach, due to the term of nationalism, Samuel Huntington argues that with the waning of the importance of ideology, nation-states are losing their importance and people are returning to more basic and traditional identities (Huntington, 1996). Huntington continues that people and nations always in an effort to describe themselves as he mentions that:

“People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identity with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations and at the broadest level, civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interest but also to define their identity. We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against” (Huntington:1996, p. 21).

Therefore, in today era, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political or economic, but they are cultural (ibid). Delanty also writes that nationalism no longer appeals to ideology but to identity, thus the predominant form that national identity takes today is that of cultural nationalism (Delanty 1996, cf, Vanderwerf, 2009).

Another postmodernist concept of nationalism is Michael Billig “banal nationalism” approach. Banal nationalism considers how national identity is produced and reproduced by daily social practices (Billig, 1995). Delantray argues that one of the pervasive forms the new nationalism takes is what Billig calls banal nationalism, the nationalism which pervades everyday life (Delanty 1996, cf, Vanderwerf, 2009). Billig argues that nationalism and the active reproduction of national identity is occurring continually within all nationstates, since there is established a continual flagging/reminding of nationhood (Billig, 1995). Therefore, the national symbols become an important part in Billig perspective on nationalism and national identity, in order to maintain the continually

sense of the community to nation. Furthermore, Billig's concept on national identity also refers to providing a continuous background for cultural production and political discourse (Torsti 2004, cf, Vanderwerf, 2009). This is because flagging occurs in all sorts of public ways, for example, through words and symbols in popular culture, such as film, music, novel, TV program, etc.

### **Concept, Elements and Dimensions of National Identity**

Nationalism according to Smith (1991) is the image of nation that creates national identity. Nationalism sense in every members of imagined community then becomes the national identity references. National identity defines as the unique style of a nation that differentiates certain nations from other nations.

The classification underlines that national identity in modernist perspective in socially constructed and negotiated within individual. National identity in is a process of production. National identity is only one of several forms of collective identity.

The sense of national identity did not only appear based on the awareness of the unity of the cultural background, ethnicity, religion, or social groups, but rather a strategy of a socio-cultural- political product to construct, produce, and reproduce new self identity as the negation of identity that imposition by the colonial power (Anderson, 2006). National identity is unites from many elements, such as culture, heritage, religion, laws and values. National identity, according to Smith, “involves some sense of political community, history, territory, patria, citizenship, common values and traditions” (Smith: 1991, p. 9). The same sense of shared experience in a group of people forges the concept of national identity. National identity becomes the set of meanings owned by a given culture which sets it apart from other cultures (Keillor and Hult, 1999). Smith underlines the role of myths, memories, values, traditions and symbols as powerful differentiators and reminders of the unique culture and fate of the ethnic community, to his analysis of national identity (Guibernau, 2004). Therefore, ethnosymbolist approach according to Smith, lays special emphasis on the subjective components of national identity (Smith, 1991).

Keillor and Hult (1999), further explains the importance of culture, ethnic and heritage in forming the notion of national identity. They describe that there were four basic component of the national identity framework, which are cultural homogeneity, belief structure, national heritage and ethnocentrism. Cultural homogeneity describe as the number of subcultures within a given set of national boundaries; belief structure defined as the role which religion play in facilitating cultural participation and solidarity; while national heritage component reflects the given culture's sense of their own unique history; and ethnocentrism generally considered to be one in which societies, make culture evaluations and attributions using their own cultural perspective as the base line criteria (Keillor and Hult, 1999). The definition explains the importance of culture, ethnic and heritage in forming the notion of national identity.

The concept of collective identity becomes important to humans, especially national identity as the legitimacy of their existence in a social system that is recognized by law. National identity defined as the extent to which a given culture recognizes and identifies a set of focal elements that set it apart from other cultures by exhibiting greater complexity and variation in the institutions of those aspects than others (Cui and Adams, 2002). In other definition, “national or ethnic identity is thus based on the value attached to the membership of one or another national or ethnic group, various authors relate ethnic identity to a long list of factors such as language, cultural background, geographic region, social class, political conflict, perception of historical events, symbols and myths, created communication and interaction space and biological differences” (Vedina and Baumann, 2009).

The conceptualization of national identity is partially formulated on the premise that the elements which characterized a nation’s identity are also the components which serve to tie sub- cultures together within national boundaries (Keillor and Hult, 1999). The form of national identity has a meaning as unification from the various cultures and historical roots of the citizen origin or called creolization. Creolization is a process whereby people of different ethnic backgrounds develop a new collective identity of ethnic reference which gradually substitutes their respective identities of origin (Knörr, 2007). However, nation is not a unitary entity in which all members think, feel and act as one, instead each individual engages in many different ways in making sense of national identity in the course of interactions with others (Thompson, 2001). The society differences will add more value to the notion of national identity.

The type of national identity known nowadays, is first, ethnic national identity and second, civic national identity. Greenfeld (1992) mentioned that the most crucial difference between ethnic and civic national identity is that in the former, citizenship is believed to be inherited from birth, while in the latter, it is voluntaristic and can be acquired (c.f. Ortmann, 2009). National identity can be based on civic symbols like the constitution, an oath of allegiance, or the flag. National identity markers can include place of birth, ancestry, place of residence, length of residence, upbringing and education, name, accent, physical appearance, dress, and commitment to place (Kiely et al., 2001).

Within the definition mentioned above national identity can conclude that national identity basis is among socially (national identity leads to a society constructions), culturally (national identity leads of an attribute of culture) and politically (national identity that given by political source or authority for example the citizenship). Nevertheless, the dynamism, continuity and plurality of the identity prevent any certain gained identity to have the power of creating monopoly and absolute authority over the individuals. In summary, the dimensions of national identity mention in table 1.

Table 1 Dimensions of national identity

Author	Dimensions of National Identity
Smith	A historic territory, or homeland; common myths and historical memories; a common, mass public culture; common legal rights and duties for all members; a common economy with territorial mobility for members.
Anderson	The nation as a political imagined community; a strategy of a socio- cultural- political product to construct, produce, and reproduce new self identity as the negation of identity that imposition by the colonial power.
Keillor & Tomas M. Hult	Four basic component of the national identity framework, which are cultural homogeneity, belief structure, national heritage and ethnocentrism
Cui & Adams 2002	Given culture recognizes and identifies a set of focal elements that set it apart from other cultures by exhibiting greater complexity and variation in the institutions of those aspects than others.
Vedina & Baumann	Value attached to the membership of one or another national or ethnic group, various authors relate ethnic identity to a long list of factors such as language, cultural background, geographic region, social class, political conflict, perception of historical events, symbols and myths, that created communication and interaction space and biological differences.
Knörr	Unification from the various cultures and historical roots of the citizen origin.
Thompson	Each individual engages in many different ways in making sense of nations and national identities in the course of interactions with others.
Greenfeld	The most crucial difference between ethnic and civic national identity is that in the former, citizenship is believed to be inherited from birth, while in the latter, it is voluntaristic and can be acquired.
Kiely et al.	‘Markers’ of national identity can include: place of birth, ancestry, place of residence, length of residence, upbringing and education, name, accent, physical appearance, dress, commitment to place.

Source: Dinne (2008, p. 78)

Within the condition of national identity development, Alex Bellamy suggests a three-level approach to understanding how national identity develops in a nation. Bellamy follows the lead of modernist and postmodernist scholars (such Benedict Anderson) in seeing national identity as phenomena that operates at various levels within a society, and argues that national identity is constituted by the interaction of these three levels of social abstraction (Bellamy 2003, cf. Vanderwerf, 2009). The Bellamy’s approach is mention in table 2.

**Table 2 Bellamy's Multi Level Model of National Identity**

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Description</b>
The "big stories"	The first level is an abstract level of 'big stories' that distinguish the nation from other nations.
The instrumental usage of the "big stories" by elites	The second level looks at the political and intellectual elites who attempt to make sense of these 'big stories' in order to legitimize particular political programs.
"Banal Nationalism" at the local and individual level	The third level examines how narratives of national identity articulated by political and intellectual elites are constantly reinterpreted in social practice.

Source: Vanderwerf (2009, p. 38)

The table above explains the level of national identity notion in nation, starting with the big picture of the idealistic notion of national identity thus will differentiate one nation to others. Further, the notion will translate in form of political identity develop and legitimize by the nation elites. And in the end, is how narratives of national identity are constantly reinterpreted in society daily live. However, these dynamics make national identity complex, overlapping and often contradictory (Vanderwerf, 2009). National identity should be seen as the result of a complex relationship between different factors that end up being manifested at a local level and impacting individuals in multiple social spheres (.ibid).

### **Postmodern Society And The Concept of National Identity**

In the perspectives of postmodernism, people's identity are shaped by their personal choices, occupations, gender, social class and nationality. It means that people's identities are more fluid, flexible and likely to change (Sidorenko, 2013). Identity is then perceived as a process, incomplete and decentered. The definition and the meaning of identity to certain society continuously evolve according to the condition of the society.

The changing of view towards identity in the postmodern age has impacted the notion of national identity. Nations as a socio-political unit are established based on the diversifying citizen identity struggled in postmodern reformulations by adapting and broadening their identities to meet new challenges to modern life and the inescapably plural characters of contemporary identity (Wurgaft, 1995). Anthony D. Smith (2001) argues that while "ethnic and civic patterns of national identity have been the dominant and formative modes of collective identification in the last two centuries, and that they still predominate today, they are likely to be replaced in postmodern societies" (cf. Sasaki, 2004). The reconceptualization of national identity in a form of postmodern will present a multilevel identity and cosmopolitan culture as a positive result of globalization (Pirc, 2013).

On the other hand, Tomlinson (1999) argues that the sense of national identity is increasingly difficult to maintain as the nation's become more penetrated, influenced by and experienced foreign cultures (cf. Sasaki, 2004). With

globalization, the self-awareness and identity of the nation's citizen is being reinforced by it being informed on anything, other, different, and foreign, since the citizen is trying to protect and defend itself from an intrusion of an identity of a stranger (Pirc, 2013). Globalization fosters a form of cosmopolitan consciousness (Beck, 1997). Rizman (2008) said that the foreigners' interaction with the locals contributed more to an increased awareness of citizen (national, cultural) diversity that offered a contribution to a realization of us being cosmopolitan (cf. Pirc, 2013). The concept of cosmopolitanism is closely related to the interconnectivity of world community (Gannaway, 2009), the equality of values among societies is based on the understanding that society as a whole is part of a universal world as brought in cosmopolitanism views, which leads to a new perspective of national identity.

Cosmopolitanism comes from the word cosmos (world) and polities (citizen), that can define an individual as the citizen of the world, as it was first proposed by a Greek philosopher named Diogenes of Sinope (Kleingeld and Brown, 2014). According to the definition of cosmopolitanism, the concept can be explained in two main keywords which are the cosmos and the polities. Adam Gannaway (2009) emphasizes that cosmos refers to the specific understanding that the world itself is a manifestation of the concept of order which tends to be harmonious, which gives a significant contribution in the bringing together of the society's biodiversity values (Gannaway, 2009). While, politics actually refers to the title, or status held by the citizen as part of a city-state government environment, the presence status provides separate responsibility for the community to be able to be loyal to an entity that has been determined (ibid.).

It can be concluded that cosmopolitanism is presented as a manifestation of the reflection of universal world thinking (Cheah, 2006). The modernist approach to the views on the nation is that all humans are divided into groups called nations (Vanderwerf, 2009). However, the globalization, brought all the nation into one term beyond boundaries, known as global village. The Identity became multiple (Pirc, 2013) and transnationalist (Appadurai, 1996). Furthermore, Cosmopolitanism is "depicted as the expression of a postnational multiculturalist model of political community, which preserves national and also facilitates global, regional and municipal loci of legal status and political membership" (Horvath, 2009: p. 29).

Cosmopolitanism basically sees the world with a single identity, meaning that every individual in a country should receive the same treatment as other people in other country (Waldron, 2010). The concept of universal sameness doesn't mean eliminate the presence of the differences that have always appeared in the middle of the dynamics of community life. Conversely, differences that arise in the community is an important role as an umbrella that houses the community to continue to firmly keep to the same unity of the world (Cheah, 2006). In another definition, cosmopolitanism means the common ownership of the world based on the universal imperatives principles (Delanty, 2009). Cosmopolitan is the notion of seeking universal rights and obligations that bind all

people together in a fair and prosperous world (Nussbaum, 2010). Therefore, cosmopolitan would lead to a new higher level of life, and form the new concept of national identity.

## II. SUMMARY

National identity in post-modern perspective, within post-modern society is defined as an identity that constructs, fluid, flexible and multiple. The concept of Banal Nationalism is looking national identity in the attribute of daily life. The community within the changes seen in the media form is an imagined community. The community constructs their identity through a shared experience communicated by the mass media. On the other hand, the impact of globalization brought the new concept of citizenship in defining their self as a nation with the sense of nationalism. The cosmopolitan society said to be fit with the concept of post-modern perspective on national identity.

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