

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY – ON PRIMORDIALISM AND INSTRUMENTALISM

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The author argues that the content of the concept of “national identity” is determined by the way how we construe “nation”. She submits two ways of construing the nation as basic ideal types: primordial versus instrumental. In primordial terminology the nation is primarily the “ethno-nation”, i.e. a community which unites individuals through “the same blood and common fate”. The instrumental way of construing the nation stresses the pragmatic and situational aspects of large communities. Thus it approaches the political understanding of the nation. The beliefs about the character of the nation prevailing within a particular community, determine the identification of the member of this community with the nation. Terminological chaos governs this area of life as well as research on it. The concept of “nationalism” can serve as an example: it denotes loyalty to the state as an instrumental political formation. Simultaneously, however, within the ideology of nationalism, the state is introduced as a primordial community. The aim of this paper is: 1. the analysis of the ways of construing the “nation” as a form of social reality by individuals; 2. the use of the construing about the nation in public, cultural, and political discourses; 3. consequences of the ways of construing the nation for the national identity of individuals.

### **The assumed ubiquity of the state nation structure of the world**

The organization of humankind into state nations<sup>1</sup> is at present firmly established and institutionalized (United Nations Organization is an example par excellence). The overwhelming majority of lay people and politicians understand state nations as “normal” and “natural” frames for the physical and social existence of a society and individuals. Many academic works on nations and nationalism are implicitly based on the assumptions that the state-nation status of human affairs is natural, correct, or even eternal.

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<sup>1</sup> The key words are not unambiguously defined in this area. I use the term “state nation” in this part of my contribution according to the definition of F.W. Riggs as “any state that promotes (more or less successfully) a sense of patriotism or collective identity among its citizens” (1991, p. 453).

Understandably, the historically formed and so for the following generations apparently “natural” frames of social existence are usually not doubted in everyday life since it would disturb the smooth inner functioning of communities and their members. However, there are also challenges to be explicitly aware that the state-nation arrangement of humankind is not self-evident. These challenges come from the communities with principles of organization different from the “state-nation” one. After the fall of communism, the different understanding of and approach to the “nation” has been fully uncovered in the countries of Eastern and Western Europe. New historical events and new streams of thought have brought new reflections on “state-nation”, “national” and “supra-national” matters, which take account of the political and cultural variety and pluralism of individuals and the possibilities of other group formations. I think that giving attention to these challenges in academic discussion would be very useful for Slovak society, too.

The arrangement of humankind into state nations has serious consequences. This arrangement places people (with greater or smaller freedom of movement) into particular settings (territories), binding them to observe the laws and legal rules, ranking and labelling them both linguistically and culturally. In some parts of our state-nation world, this world order creates a deep national metaphysics around the nations (see e.g. Liisa Malkki, 1992), which almost penetrates under the people’s skin: “It is a great family of nations that lives on our Mother-Earth”, “Humankind has lived as nations from time immemorial”, or: “God divided people into groups on our Earth and sowed the seeds of nations.” It follows from “national” metaphysics, among other things, that being outside of the nation in any way is – both for individuals and for the community – suspicious, if not almost pathological.

To “national” metaphysics belong the ideas of the native country, homeland, roots, national affiliation, and identity that are generally shared in the public and political life of “nations”. The meanings ascribed to these words need no definition. These concepts are fixed in everyday language and the language of academic studies and thus they re-create and strengthen social constructions of the nation and national identity. It is the everyday matter-of-course that makes elusive topics of analysis from the concepts associated with “national” terminology. Common sense, as C. Geertz put it, “lies so artlessly before our eyes it is almost impossible to see” (1983, p. 92).

### **Challenges for the study of national identity**

One of the leading researchers in the field of nations, Anthony D. Smith, began the first chapter of his book on the origin of nations (1986) with suggestive questions. His questions expressing the essential facts relating to national identity are as follows: Why are men and women willing to die for their countries? Why do they identify so strongly with their nations? Is national character and nationalism univer-

sal? ... And the last question: And what, in any case, do we mean by the concepts of the “nation” and “national identity”?

In my paper I aim to analyse the ways individuals construe the “nation” as a form of social reality, proclaim it as their homeland and mention it in public and political discourses. I focus on primordial and instrumental understanding of the nation and how it impacts on collective and individuals’ national identity.<sup>2</sup>

Looking at the apt questions of Anthony D. Smith from this study’s perspective, the replies could be as follows: First, not all men and women are willing to die for “their countries” (and probably ever fewer). Their willingness to make a sacrifice to “the nation” depends on how they understand “the nation”. If they understand it in an extremely primordial way, then their willingness is strong. If it is understood rather instrumentally, the willingness to sacrifice themselves dissipates more or less.

The second inference in this study is that the manner of construction of the “nation” are derived from the type of one’s attachment to the ethnic and/or national community. What people mean by the concepts of the “ethnic community”, “nation”, “ethnic and national identity”, determines whether they relate to them in primordial or instrumental ways. The arguments for these statements follow.

### **Primordial attachments of individuals to communities**

Clifford Geertz is usually presented in the literature as the author who introduced the concept of the primordial attachments and sentiments (he himself refers to Edward Shils) of an individual to the world. According to Geertz (1963), by a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the “givens” or more precisely, the assumed “givens” of the social existence of humans. “Givenness” is immediate contiguity and kin connection but also being born into a particular community, religion, culture, then it is the mother tongue, and sharing the same social practices. According to Geertz, the congruities of blood, speech, beliefs, attitudes, customs are perceived by people as inexpressible and at the same time overpowering *per se*. One is bound to one’s kinsman, one’s neighbour, one’s fellow believer, *ipso facto*, as the result not only of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or obligation, but in great part by virtue of some absolute importance attributed to the very tie itself. The strength and form of primordial attachments differ from individual to individual, from community to community, from one period of time to another. But, as Geertz puts it, within each person, each community and at

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper I concentrate on the idea of primordial vs instrumental construction of national identity by individuals, although, obviously, the issues are very close to the topics such as the history of the formation and development of nations, nationalism – its definition or categorizations, other – non-national social ideologies and value systems, etc.

every time there are particular ties, inferred from the feeling of natural, almost spiritual affinity rather than from social interaction. They are non-rational foundations of the human personality. Geertz says that these lifelong ties can, under particular conditions, lead to conflicts with other human loyalties, and especially that they can destroy civic society.

Preference for one's kin is explained in a different way, although still a primordial one, by the sociobiological theory of Pierre van den Berghe (1978). The reception of this conception in social studies is rather controversial. According to van den Berghe, human sociability and cooperation can be explained (among other things) by the mechanism of kin selection. Individuals try to pass their genes to their descendants directly or indirectly through their kinship, with whom they have very similar genes. Therefore, they favour relatives over non-relatives and the close kin to more distant relatives. Helping the near kin is actually not altruism, it is merely a form of genetic egoism. According to van den Berghe, preference for the relatives is a social cement in people like in other animals.

The learning theory explains the individual's preference for relatives and close people in a distinct way. Interpersonal kin relations (both biological and assumed, e.g. in the case of child adoption) are the very first relations experienced by a child and are of vital importance for him/her. The child perceives them as close, emotional, immediately experienced, concrete, intimately known, unique, and unrepeatable; they are meaningful *per se*. Relationships of this type enable him/her to trust others, relax without the need to be on alert and without the necessity of constant cost-benefit analysis.

The primordial attachments of everyday life are expressed in the ordinary language used by people when they want to describe or explain the character of their relations. In their efforts to stress their belongingness to and contiguity in the same faith, believers address one another as "brother" and "sister" within particular religious communities. The closeness of basic attitudes and thinking of individuals is often expressed as "we are of the same blood group". A swearword relating to one's mother or father is regarded as the most demeaning not only by their child but also by adult individuals. There is an ideological phrase known in post-communist countries: "my/our native political (i.e. communist) party."

According to C. Geertz (1963), primordial attachments are also created at the social level – when a community shares ideas of (also assumed) blood ties, the same race, speech, territory, religion, customs, and traditions. Many cultures regard primordial communities as universal and eternal. The lineage on both the mother's and the father's sides of the family, the history of the religious, ethnic group or nation can be traced back many centuries. History and ancestors are very important in the primordial community (Bačová, V., 1966). The primordial community as "a historically developed givenness" shows a tendency to dominate individuals. Membership of a primordial community is assigned to an individual and is considered to be hereditary (e.g. a caste but also a religion). This is why such a community prefers en-

dogamy. The membership of a particular individual in a particular community is exclusive, one can be member of only one primordial community: race, caste, religious or ethnic group.

Primordial loyalty of an individual to the community that often accompanies one throughout his or her life can be explained psychologically by primary socialization and the mechanism of social heritage. Affiliation to family and relatives (to caste, race, religion, nation) is the first learned and conscious affiliation. These affiliations are the interiorized identities and values of parents and guardians who try to instil them into their children as soon as possible. Kin ties from primary families are later generalized to the greater communities (ethnic or national – see below), to which the particular family belongs.

### **Instrumental attachments of individuals to communities**

The individuals' attachments to particular communities that are of instrumental character are the opposite pole of primordial attachments. These are individuals' affiliations to the communities which are beneficial to them or bring them practical advantages (mostly economic and political). They are based on rational awareness, not closeness, but the need for protection of common interests. The individual understands the community as an instrument for achieving his goals. These bonds of an individual to a community are characterized as cool-headed, formal, intentional, purposeful, requiring conscious loyalty and formed on the basis of choice, but also as vague, temporary, intermittent and routine. They prevail in organizations such as trade unions, political parties, professional unions, sports clubs, local interest groups, parent-teacher associations, etc. These groupings can be founded and can cease to exist. They are not universal and historically lasting. The attachment to them consists more in cool-headed calculation of interests. No emotions are assumed in the membership. Instrumental groupings are segmentary and simultaneous membership of an individual in several instrumental communities is therefore not eliminated.

According to instrumental approaches, primordial attachments can also vary. For instance, in the case of the assumed primordial attachment to native language, the arguments of instrumentalists are as follows: there are a number of people who speak several languages or dialects and do not prefer any of them. Many people do not show any emotional relation to their mother tongue, they even do not have to know the exact name of their language. In some situations the members of different linguistic groups can deliberately and voluntarily decide to adapt their language to that of another group. They can also decide to change their language and raise their children in another language to become different from other communities. Ultimately, as P.R. Brass says (1991, p. 70), many people, if not the majority of them, do not think about their mother tongue and do not feel anything for it.

### **Primordial and instrumental communities as ideal types**

Both types of attachments and communities – primordial and instrumental – can overlap. Which attachments and which communities are primordial and which instrumental can be a matter of discussion and controversy. There are also hereditary professional associations, university clubs with traditions, various political “brotherhoods” or ethnically based political parties. The fact that primordial/instrumentalist categorization is arbitrary is revealed when an instrumental society (or more precisely its leaders) intentionally “ascribes” to itself the attributes of a primordial community and thus manipulates with its members. Their aim in this endeavour is to ensure the unity and long life of the community or to strengthen and prolong the power of the leaders. Extreme political movements and state ideology declaring the necessity to love the state (identification of the state with the ethnic community – see below) can serve as a good example.

The characteristics of primordial and instrumental memberships of the individual recall the well-known theory of the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies. According to Tönnies, primordial attachments are typical of a small community (*Gemeinschaft*), within larger communities (*Gesellschaft*) the chief aims are instrumental. In the latter the people are too heterogeneous to share the feeling of community. It can be inferred that there are periods in development and in particular types of society, when either primordial or instrumental attachments are prioritized.

There are some communities and cultures (including scholars within them) that regard primordial communities as a universal phenomenon of social life. The arguments include not only the dominance of primordial attachments in the pre-modern period, but also current revitalization of ethnic ties in modern societies. So far, no contemplations have eliminated the return of people to traditional communities in the postmodern period either. By contrast, indications of return to local, religious, and other more intimate groupings of people are observable.

A. Lange and C. Westin (1985) try to show that both primordial and instrumental approaches “are an example of an unnecessary polarization of inherently complementary aspects of human life” (p. 22). All sociology textbooks with numerous definitions of human communities of various types (including primordial and instrumental ones) confirm that science as well as the self-reflection of communities are the products of history and culture. Looking at various communities (and attachments of individuals to them), promotion of one aspect or the other does not mean errors of science (in this case of sociology or social anthropology) but a variety of outlooks, constructing and revealing psycho-social reality (Smedslund, 1990).

### **Primordialism and instrumentalism in discourses on ethnicity, nation, state, and identity**

The problem in the political and the cultural spheres is not the construction of primordial attachments and primordial understanding of large communities in itself, but their relation to the existing and prevailing world order of nation-states.

Our considerations in this part will be as follows:

(1) We want to emphasize that the state does not belong to the primordial types of community, quite on the contrary: it is an exclusively instrumental social organization.

(2a) Ethnic communities (sharing a common history and ancestors) have been defined in social studies as primordial communities par excellence. However,

(2b) in characterizing ethnic communities one can also at present note “the fight” between the primordial and instrumental approaches.

(3) Somewhere between the ethnic community and the state there is the “nation” which is (confusingly) defined in two ways: a) as an ethnic community (ethno-nation); b) as a political community, i.e. the state.

(4) The essence of nationalism as an ideology of faithfulness to a political nation, i.e. the state, consists in the fact that it tries to clothe the ties of an individual to the state in a primordial robe.

#### *(1) The state as an instrumental community*

Modern state is built on formal membership and on equal rights of citizens. “A deep horizontal comradeship” does not prevail, although it can present itself as such (for details see B. Anderson, 1983), but vertical economic integration. The state of today is a modern organization (invention) and there is nothing “natural” about it in the sense that, for example, blood relations appear to be natural. There is no doubt, however, that the state as an instrumental community needs the support of its members.

#### *(2a) Ethnicity regarded primordially*

Social studies began to deal explicitly with the issues of ethnicity later than with the issues of nation (see e.g. Glazer, N., Moynihan, D.P., 1975). This fact confirms that assumptions taken for granted and considered natural are difficult to subject to analysis and it requires a certain time. In the fifties, when the interest of social studies in ethnicity increased, ethnic communities were defined as the communities with primordial attachments sui generis.

Primordialism has presented and continues to present the quintessence of ethnicity as immediate contiguity, kindred spirits, kin connection of individuals, self-attribution of membership, common culture (language, religion, values,

norms), common territory (country, region, nationality) and common (also assumed) biological descent (common ancestors, race, tribe). These emotional features of ethnicity are, according to primordialists, given and undeniable. Ethnicity has its own essence, qualitative “core”. It provides individuals with their deepest identity. It promotes unity and solidarity, which overcomes all divisions within the community (class, age, sex, qualifications, etc.). It is strongly activated when a community is in danger.

According to the primordial approach, ethnic identity is given to the individual just like the primordial membership of a community into which he/she was born (i.e. for ever). As one cannot change the country, where one was born, or one’s native language, one cannot change one’s identity, which is deeply rooted in him or her. According to P.R. Brass (1991), it is common to all primordial views that ethnicity is based on descent. The primordial understanding of one’s ethnic membership explains the non-rational behaviour of people, which is against their other (even existential) interests when “defending” their ethnicity, their willingness to suffer persecution or to die “for their nation”. Ethnicity (but also religion, membership of a particular group, language, etc.) contains for these people such ideas, attachments, values, which the individuals consider to be sufficiently valuable to preserve, to cultivate, pass them on to their children or to die for them.

#### *(2b) Ethnicity construed instrumentally*

On the opposite side of the primordialist theories of ethnicity there are instrumentalist theories, which emphasize instrumental, pragmatic, situational, and variable aspects of ethnicity. Ethnic identity is, in view of the instrumentalist approach, regarded as a rational reaction to the demands of a situation or to the social pressure within the community or from another community. Ethnic identity is not “given” to an individual in advance and for ever, it is not primordial, but is constructed during one’s development and can undergo changes during one’s life. It is only one of a number of identities of the modern individual and therefore, its importance to an individual in different situations, at different times, in different cultures and communities can vary. The development and changes in ethnicity (of both individual and community) are thus explained.

According to one of the instrumental theories of ethnicity presented by Fredrik Barth (1969), the characteristics of an ethnic community (language, culture, religion, territory) are not constant or fixed for ever. They change spontaneously. Ethnic communities isolate themselves from others, they are demarcated and defined by others and demarcate themselves. According to F. Barth, the essence of ethnicity is the putting of borders between human communities by self-defining, defining others and being defined by others. According to other similar theories (e.g. Bacal, A., 1990, Brass, P. R., 1991), ethnicity is “a strategic instrument” of a particular community for enforcing its interests. Ethnicity as a definition of a particular



group of people (on the grounds of any criteria), is “invented”. It serves as a construction used for a particular purpose, which “objectively” does not have any being itself. It merely exists in the constructions of people. This naturally does not mean that the construction does not have an impact on either individuals or communities. The constructions (“collective representations”) can have an enormous influence on the activities produced by people on the basis of their constructions.

*(3) Two ways of “nation-building” in the belief systems*

Some theories of nation-building argue that ethnic communities (based on primordial attachments) “turn into” “nations” after fulfilling some criteria such as living in a particular territory, development of economic and cultural life, self-awareness as a social unit and unification of the language. (For a survey of these theories, see e.g. Brouček, S. et al., 1991.) According to the theories of nationalism, the “nation” can then claim a state. If a particular ethnic community does not satisfy these criteria, it has no right to the label of “nation” (and then it does not have the right to a state either). In terms of these theories, ethnic community should, in an ideal case, have time (and luck) to complete the criteria “submitted” during its history. However, history shows that the development was rather muddled on all continents. To stay in Europe, there have been communities which did not achieve this ethnic self-awareness. However, they had already been historically unified into a political formation (i.e. a state) before the process of ethnic awareness. They turned into state nations by political means (see examples in Western Europe). Other communities, mostly in Eastern and Central Europe, were ethnically “awakened” (revived) within a political alliance with other communities or in resistance and animosity against them. The current understanding of the “nation” in these countries is strongly influenced by whether in their history the majority of the population was mobilized and united by political means before becoming ethnically aware, or, on the other hand, the communities had to “fight” for their state on the basis of their ethnic awareness. In the former case, the ethnic (i.e. primordial) and state (i.e. instrumental) attachments are not in such sharp contradiction as in the latter case.

*(4) Making use of primordial attachments for loyalty to the state*

In order to make people loyal to the future or existing state regardless of their previous or current ethnic affiliation, an optimal opportunity occurred to use the “natural” primordial-ethnic loyalties of the people for their loyalty to the state. Within certain historical contexts (which were subjected to profound analysis by A. D. Smith, E. Gellner, B. Anderson, M. Hroch, E. Hobsbawn, G. Csepeli, D. Kováč and many others) it appeared to be exceptionally advantageous to fill the concept of the “nation” by mythical arguments on metaphoric kinship, horizontal solidarity, common history and common fate of a particular community of the people concerned.

The idea of blood relations between the members of a "national" community, whose highest aspiration and pre-determination is to become a state, has played and still plays a significant role. In terms of the primordial understanding, the "nation" differs from the state even after achieving national statehood. The "nation" is introduced to its members if not as blood brotherhood, at least as a "deep, horizontal comradeship"; kinship of the people with common ancestry, into which they were born, and to which they belong through their birth for ever and invariably. This "national" community is specified most often ethnically, i.e. by culture, language, names of ancestors, and not by naming the state political formation.

For these reasons, W. Connor uses a more precise term, namely ethno-nationalism (1994)<sup>3</sup> for nationalism, which is based on primordialist claims. Its content is diametrically different from the purely political idea of the state, where all, regardless of descent and blood relations are entitled to equal civil rights and are class-structured within the state.

From a psychological standpoint there is a mystery in nationalism (regardless of the type of nationalism) that an individual can and does attribute intimate, primordial attachments to such a large, abstract and imagined community as a nation. According to some authors, the success of nationalism can today be explained by the fact that it made an efficient use of the (psychological?) strength of human primordial attachments and extended them to a macrocommunity, i.e. to the nation state.

In addition to all this, it is obvious that primordial (ethnic, religious) attachments to the same community differ from ethno-nationalism (i.e. the ideology of loyalty to the "nation" state). This difference was very well defined by Ernest Gellner (1980). According to him, nationalism means a transfer of the focus of people's identity into a culture that is disseminated through literacy and the formal system of education. It is not the mother tongue (i.e. primordial attachment) that is important any more, but the language of "alma mater" (as an instrumental means of communication). This is a consequence, in Gellner's opinion, of industrialization and the demands for a standardized system of education, which brought the community (polity) and culture closer together (1983). In these – psychological – terms nationalism extended the cultural and civilization repertoire of the sources of an individual's identity. However, nationalism assumes and relies on the efficiency of primordial sentiments.

Another basic difference between primordial attachments (ethnicity) and nationalism (loyalty to the state) is how they are "propagated" and submitted to public discussion. Certain "natural" primordial human loyalties and social affiliations exist and function even without intentional and targeted cultivation, but the ideology of nationalism has to be constantly repeated, promoted and propagated. Therefore, nationalism could not have been spread before the modern era: there were no mod-

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<sup>3</sup> There is an abundance of works on nationalism, presenting various conceptions, categorizations, definitions, or types of nationalism. I refer to W. Connor because he illustrates primordial construction very well.

ern technical devices, mass media, or institutions of the centralized modern state, which serve nationalism as instruments of propaganda today (Sugar, P., 1981, Eriksen, T.H., 1991).

### **Lay “theories” and constructions of the ethnicity and the nation**

The beliefs of the community and of individuals about the character of their community and the ensuing convictions about what the relationship of the member of the community to the community should be like, are part of an implicit lay “sociological theory”. Other denotations of these beliefs are naive, subjective, ordinary, and common-sense theories, everyday experience (see Semin, G.R., Gergen, K., Eds., 1990). We labelled the opinions of individuals on what is meant by ethnic/national community and what should be their relationship to that community, as individual implicit “naive ethnic theories” (Bačová, V., 1995). They are the opinions of individuals on the functioning of the social world, in this case the ethnic world. They can be defined as ideas, schemes, constructions, practices, values, etc. of individuals, who use them to grasp the phenomenon of ethnicity as such and to describe, explain and anticipate “ethnic behaviour”. These ideas are often “silent”, unarticulated, unverbilized, they are not formulated into clear propositions. But since they are shared in the particular culture, they are understandable to other members of the same culture. An individual does not always have to realize the ideas, but in some circumstances (emotional situations, social and individual crisis, ethnic confrontations, etc.), the individual needs (or is pressed) to make his/her (ethnic) identity transparent.

The content of ethnic convictions of individuals is “supplied” by the ethnic/national ideology that is dominant in the particular culture and community. With one’s growth and maturation, one’s knowledge of ethnic issues expands and one’s ethnic and national beliefs can vary. The culture and community “prescribe” the value of the nation to an individual. It is generally valid that within a particular community or culture, that has developed and preserves a primordial approach to its nation, the majority of its members create their private everyday “theories” about the nation in the same way. These will differ remarkably from the members of a community where an instrumental understanding of the nation prevails. The importance which individuals ascribe to the categories of ethnicity, nation and citizenship as the values significant for their lives, will also be different in different populations. There will probably also be differences in the extent to which the individual is able to discriminate between these categories.

As has already been said, the meaning of the ethnic concepts: nation, state, ethnicity, ethnic majority, ethnic minorities and culture, is entirely different in Central-Eastern Europe and in the majority population of Western Europe. The same concepts are also often related to different categories of the people. The difference is

caused by a different history, where state-building preceded the ethnic mobilization of people in Western Europe (which does not exclude later ethnic “awakening” of certain groups of indigenous population). The communities in Central and Eastern Europe, however, underwent the process of ethnic awakening before the creation of “their” states. This is why, for example, in some Western countries, the nation-state is mostly associated with the majority of the population (indigenous population or “mainstream people”), while ethnicity mostly concerns minorities, i.e. groups of immigrants. In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, ethnic minorities are parts of indigenous inhabitants currently living in other (often neighbouring) states, who, however, have lived in the same territory for centuries. They were made into minorities not as the result of inward migration, but because of the change of state borders. The difference in the perception of “ordinary people” can be illustrated by our research findings, where we compared perception of ethnic concepts by the samples of Slovak and British inhabitants, members of both the ethnic majority and the minority (Bačová, V., Ellis P., 1996). The respondents in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have constructed the basic ethnic concepts entirely differently, however, depending on their status of ethnic majority vs minority within their country. When comparing ethnic/national identity in two or more communities, knowledge of the way of construction of ethnic communities and nations by different populations in the particular community is essential for interpretation of the results. The difference in the use of “ethnic” terminology between researchers and writers is also worth noting.

### **Construction of individual ethnic/national identity**

The basic idea of this paper is: the individual’s ethnic/national identity (meaning identification of the individual with the elements of his or her ethnic/national world) is associated with his/her inclination to primordial versus instrumental belief about the character of ethnic/national communities. These beliefs are known as social constructions and are conditioned mainly by the history of the particular community. The content of the beliefs about the nation “professed” by the individual; whether his or her ethnic/national world is full of primordial, or of instrumental attachments affects the patterns of his/her national identification. It can concern not only what properties are ascribed to an ethnic community (content of identity), but also the identification variants, e.g. crisis in identity, conflicting identifications, vulnerability and “defensiveness” of identity, the feeling of a threat to their identity.

The influence of “ethnic/national belief” on ethnic/national identity lies in the fact that beliefs are not purely cognitive formations. They involve motives strong enough for the individuals to support and maintain their communities morally and ideologically. The beliefs contain not only arguments and explanations, but also values, goals, and aspirations. One can therefore assume that there is a strong relation between primordial versus instrumental ethnic belief and the emotional intensity of

one's ethnic/national membership in the sense that individuals with primordial beliefs will feel their ethnic/national affiliation more intensively. Our research (Bačová, 1997) has brought evidence of significant differences in these identification patterns between primordial and instrumental respondents.

### **Conclusion**

In Western social studies an opinion has prevailed and continues to prevail that primordialism, ethnicity, and strong ethnic identity of individuals are romantic and irrational relics of the past that hinder progress. The essence of this attitude contains (among other things) another value system of individualism, that has been developed and dominates in Western culture and Western communities. We think that these opinions on ethnicity cannot be generalized to communities and cultures, where the value system of individualism is not dominant. Individuals living in a different culture construct their belief system and identifications on other foundations.

Surprisingly, it is actually non-psychologists, who, using psychology as an argument, put forward the theories on the strength of ethnicity and primordial attachments. Walter Connor as a political scientist, (1993) analysed the speeches of great "leaders of nations" (Hitler, Mussolini, Mao) as well as national revivalists (writers and poets). A conspicuous uniformity of phraseology was observable in a number of these speeches. Phrases and pictures of family, blood, brothers, sisters, mothers, ancestors, home were almost universal. The speeches and phrases were able to mobilize masses and many individuals also believed them in private. W. Connor justifies the force of these appeals to primordial attachments by their emotional strength through which they have affected and continue to affect the human mind. He says that the emotional strength and the effect of ethnic attachments (meaning primordial attachments) is currently underestimated in general, although it indicates a lot about the essence and potentials of ethno-nationalism. Psychology and social studies could help to elucidate the essence of the emotional impact of ethnicity on individuals.

If ethnic/national beliefs cannot be understood as purely cognitive formations, a number of questions arise in this connection. Here are some of them:

Do primordial attachments reflect a deeply rooted human need to find a source of safety and security? Do individuals try to find the source of safety and security within smaller communities (also ethnic ones) which provide them with comfort within the well-known social, almost family setting? In what conditions and when does the individual need to extend primordial attachments from his or her close family circle to a large community such as the nation?

Is psychology able to corroborate or refute arguments relating to the individual's need to belong to a large community of people and to identify with it? Or can it argue that it is only generalization of the fundamental need for interpersonal love to the large community in the learning process?

Why do some cultures and individuals construct their ethnic worlds as if they were founded on primordial attachments, while others construct them in an instrumentalist way? How is the “cultural and personal system” of primordial and instrumental beliefs formed and preserved these days? How do individuals convert their beliefs from culture and how do they keep (or change) them in their interactions within a cultural community? What are the circumstances in which the specific needs of the individual play their roles in forming their ethnic beliefs, and under what conditions do the individuals take over more or less mechanically the opinions of intellectuals and politicians?

How are primordial vs instrumental beliefs interconnected in the individual’s construct network with other cultural, religious, and political beliefs, for example, about the functioning of the community, modernism, liberalism, universalism, democracy and opinions on human rights?

What are the psychological needs of present-day – modern humans in the area of their affiliation to large human communities? What is the difference between individuals living in communities with the dominant primordial attachments and values (e.g. in villages) and individuals living in cities? Can we still think about a sort of universal rule of mental functioning of humans and about “the only and invariable” national identity of the individual, when these are dependent on historical and cultural factors to such an extent?

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