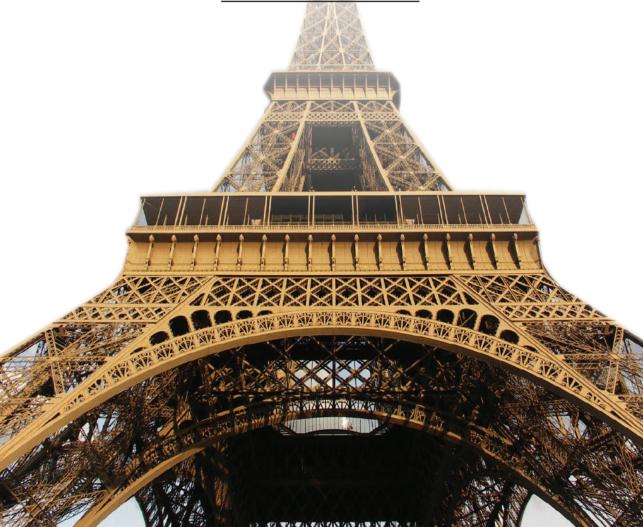# Nation-Building and the politics of state-building: the French example and its limitations

Catherine Shakdam

About

Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies is an independent, nonprofit think tank based in Baghdad, Iraq. Its primary mission is to offer an authentic perspective on public and foreign policy issues related to Iraq and the region.
Al-Bayan Center pursues its vision by conducting independent analysis, as well as proposing workable solutions for complex issues that concern policymakers and academics.

Nation-Building and the politics of state-building: the French example and its limitations

Catherine Shakdam *

"There cannot be a firmly established political state unless there is a teaching body with definitely recognized principles. If the child is not taught from infancy that he ought to be a republican or a monarchist, a Catholic or a free-thinker, the state will not constitute a nation; it will rest on uncertain and shifting foundations; and it will be constantly exposed to disorder and change." Napoleon I, 1805[1]

While nation-building, as a normative concept means different things to different people on the basis of one's objectivity and political inclination, the core concept revolves around the notion of social homogeneity within defined territorial boundaries, with the inferred precondition of sovereignty. If nation-building is not tethered to any particular system of governance it nevertheless calls for sovereign independence if it is indeed to succeed.

And though in theory, one could imagine that such process of social homogenization could take place under duress, to impose a particular reality, nation-building is better served through commonalities and the need for communities to pull together towards a future they envision collectively.

In a research paper for Harvard University Alberto Alesina and Bryony Reich write: "Nations stay together when citizens share enough values and preferences and can communicate with each other. Homogeneity amongst people can be built with education, teaching a common language, building infrastructure for easier travel, but also by brute force such as prohibiting

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1. Quote from Ramirez and Boli (1987).

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local cultures or even genocide."

Daesh's social engineering experiment serves as a perfect example as far as violence and genocide are concerned. To fulfill their vision of a reactionary Jihadist Islamic State, Daesh ideologues ambitionned to forcibly impose their religious reality and thus rise a society to their image, under an order they sanctioned, to the exclusion of all other socio-political and religious realities to achieve absolute control over communities within the boundaries of their territories. The term Jihadist is to be understood here as the expression of Takfirism - a concept exclusive to Salafism and Wahhabism.

Derived from the word kafir, meaning infidel, the Arabic word could refer to any ideology that is based on declaring the dissent apostate, and therefore eligible to be killed by the members of the group. Within the perspective of state-building Takfirism has proven to be a devastating weapon of forced social homogenization as it has rationalised the killing of communities on the basis of their ethnicity, and/or religious beliefs. The plight of the Yezidis in 2014, when tens of thousands of men, women, and children were forced to find shelter in a mountain to escape the fury of Daesh army sits a bleak reminder of what Takfirism entails when wielded.[2]

When looked at from a purely political or institutional standpoint nation-building has often been associated to the process of modernisation of otherwise labelled failed-states as part of the conceptualisation of the process of national affirmation. The idea being that 'failed-states' will be given assistance in the development of their government infrastructures, civil society, dispute resolutions mechanisms, strategic development, and overall economy building.

Such 'modernist' approach however denies those fundamentals Aristotle enounced in his treatise: 'Politics' when he asserts that Politics - as in the gerance of the affairs of the nation-state, is not a struggle of homogenization: the individual versus the group, or a group versus another in the pursuit of power, but rather a device for getting done such

2. Almost 10,000 Yazidis 'killed or kidnapped in Isis genocide but true scale of horror may never be known - The Independent, May 2017.

elementary tasks as the maintenance of order and security without too great encroachments on individual liberty. The state, Aristotle writes "is a community of well-being in families and aggregations of families for the sake of a perfect and self-sufficing life."[3]

If commonality was to be found as to the nature of nation-building, it would be in the definition of its socio-political velocity. If regime change is by definition revolutionary, nation-building is evolutionary. On that most experts agree. Nation-building is first and foremost a social process - it cannot be engineered from the outside in, but needs instead to be promoted from within. Foreign diktat here will only serve as disruption to the forming socio-political and economic organism. More importantly still, and maybe there lies one of one most pertinent paradoxes, before a nation can be built, a state must exist.

The two, although often used synonymously to one another are very distinct in their conceptualisation, although it is granted that they are tightly intertwined.

The evolution of the Italian city-states into a nation, or the multiple languages and cultural groups in France into the nation of France took centuries, and were the results not only of political leadership, or the formulation of a common institutional future, but as well of changes in technology and economic advancements. Both the agricultural and then industrial revolutions contributed greatly in affirming France as a nation and no longer just a state. If national identities are found in struggles, they are defined in the development of Society. Undeniably, economic empowerment as well as communication, culture, education, as well as many other factors are key.

Association of First Nations National Chief Matthew Coon cited the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (released in 2001 by the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard) proposal of a Nation Building Model of Economic Development. The project defined Nation-building as: "Equipping First Nations with the institutional foundation necessary to increase their capacity to effectively assert self-governing powers on behalf of their own economic, social and cultural

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3. Aristotle - Politics.

objectives." The study identified four core elements of a nation building model: 1) genuine self rule (First Nations making decisions about resource allocations, project funding and development strategy), 2) creating effective governing institutions (non-politicized dispute resolution mechanisms and getting rid of corruption), 3) cultural match (giving first nations institutions legitimacy in the eyes of their citizens), and the need for a strategic orientation (long-term planning).

In their Harvard paper Alberto Alesina and Bryony Reich posit that "One of the reasons for the difficulties of what many consider "failed states" is that some peoples who had been integrated were taken apart by European colonialism, while others who were separate peoples were integrated together in new states not based in common identities. Particularly in Africa and the Middle East, new political borders paid little attention to national identities in the creation of new states. Thus the notion of nation-state, a nation which developed the governmental apparatus of a state, was often nonsense. While in Europe nation-building historically preceded state-building, in post-colonial states, state-building preceded nation-building. The aftermath of colonialism led to the need for nation-building."

A 2003 study by James Dobbins[4] for the RAND Corporation defines nation-building as "the use of armed force in the aftermath of a conflict to underpin an enduring transition to democracy." Such definition of the process of nation-building is based on the idea of America's exceptionalism, similarly to that expressed by France when it proclaimed in the 19th century that its mandate was to civilise those it stood superior over by the very nature of the ideals it was promoting.

Addressing the French Parliament in 1882, Jules Ferry encapsulated France's position and ambition as follow: "We must believe that if Providence deigned to confer upon us a mission by making us masters of the earth this mission consists not of attempting an impossible fusion of races but of simply spreading or awakening among the other races the superior notions of which we are the guardians." In 1884 Ferry added: "The superior races have a right to dominate the inferior races, to civilize

4. AMERICA'S ROLE IN NATION-BUILDING, FROM GERMANY TO IRAQ - 2003 Rand Corporation.

them."

The first reference to the concept of exceptionalism as a political thought, and possibly its origin, was by French writer Alexis de Tocqueville in his 1835/1840 work, Democracy in America.

"The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one. Their strictly Puritanical origin, their exclusively commercial habits, even the country they inhabit, which seems to divert their minds from the pursuit of science, literature, and the arts, the proximity of Europe, which allows them to neglect these pursuits without relapsing into barbarism, a thousand special causes, of which I have only been able to point out the most important, have singularly concurred to fix the mind of the American upon purely practical objects. His passions, his wants, his education, and everything about him seem to unite in drawing the native of the United States earthward; his religion alone bids him turn, from time to time, a transient and distracted glance to heaven. Let us cease, then, to view all democratic nations under the example of the American people."

The concept of exceptionalism has also been discussed in the context of the 21st century in a book co-authored by former American Vice President Dick Cheney: Exceptional: Why the World Needs a Powerful America.

Such definition of nation-building differs dramatically from other, maybe more classical views, in that it put the onus on the military to incept, promote, and engineer the process of democratization - arguably in contradiction with the very values of democracy. Whether nation-building can be artificially imposed or whether such process ought to happen organically through the promotion of social stimuli remain at the centre of a much heated debate among experts, and politicians.

Readers will note that our modern understanding of nation-building, contrary to a classical approach both infers and implies democratisation. But why democracy?

Charles Hauss (Chip) Hauss, Adjunct Professor in the Department of Public and International Affairs at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia offers an answer when he writes: "As with the definition of the term,

the importance of democratization is easy to see at first glance but is much more complicated in practice. Democratization is important because of one of the most widely (but not universally) accepted trends in international relations, known as the democratic peace. Put simply, democracies do not have wars with other democracies. There were a handful of ambiguous cases in the 19th century in which democratizing countries fought other emerging democracies. But there have been no cases of an established democracy going to battle with another one since 1900. Obviously, that does not mean that democracies cannot go to war with each other. But there is something about democracy and the relationship between democracies that allows them to settle their disputes peacefully."[5]

The democratic peace hypothesis was first formulated by Immanuel Kant in the 17th century when he posited that perpetual peace can be achieved by developing a federation or league of free republican nations. Since political scientists who have explored this hypothesis have focused on the following two assumptions: 1- that true democracies do not wage wars against one another on the premise that they have developed sophisticated conflict resolution methods and 2- that true democracies do not initiate war at all.

If such theories may hold on paper, reality came to dispute such foundations. War as it were, remains a recourse, even democracies resort to, however much they ambition to rationalise it. In fact nation-building has often been used as a euphemism for external intervention and the extension of empires.

If it can be said that failed states are the cause of national, regional, or world security problems, or that human rights abuses are so extensive that the need to overcome them in turn overcomes the traditional sovereign rights of states under international law, then intervention in the name of nation-building can be seen to be justified.

Iraq sits a perfect case study. An article published in the Washington Times opens an interesting window onto the concept of nation-building through military interventionism - an art the United States has arguably, if not mastered, wielded.

5. Democratization - Charles Hauss, 2003

The article reads: "In October 2000, presidential candidate George W. Bush famously derided the concept of nation building and the suggestion that the U.S. military should take the lead in building up failed states.

"Maybe I'm missing something here," Mr. Bush said in a debate with Democratic rival Al Gore. "I mean, are we going to have some kind of nation-building corps from America? Absolutely not."

Almost eight years later, U.S. interagency "provincial reconstruction teams" are trying to rebuild the economy and government in Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S. Army's just-revised field manual puts military post-conflict "stability operations" on a par with fighting wars. And the State Department's new Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization is recruiting an elite Civilian Reserve Corps of specialists — engineers, judges, prison wardens, health experts and city planners — to deploy to failed states in a crisis in as little as 48 hours. And none of the leading candidates to succeed Mr. Bush seems likely to reverse course.

"They don't typically use the term, but the Bush administration has clearly embraced the idea of nation building with the fervor of a convert," said James Dobbins, special envoy in the Clinton administration to a string of failed states, from Somalia to Haiti, and Mr. Bush's first special envoy to Afghanistan after the 2001-02 military campaign.

"After Iraq, the main Democratic criticism has been not that we shouldn't do nation building, but that we should do it better the next time we try," he said."

Sometimes, one may argue often, nation-building may simply be used as a justification for the expansion of imperial control.

If nation-building matters, what is meant by nation-building matters even more.

To understand the concept of nation-building, one needs to have a clear understanding of what constitutes a nation.

Prominent French historian Ernest Renan in his book: Qu'est-ce

qu'une nation? offers the most comprehensive answer to date.

"A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present- day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. Man, Gentlemen, does not improvise. The nation, like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavours, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more-these are the essential conditions for being a people. One loves in proportion to the sacrifices to which one has consented, and in proportion to the ills that one has suffered. One loves the house that one has built and that one has handed down. The Spartan song-"We are what you were; we will be what you are" -- is, in its simplicity, the abridged hymn of every patrie.

More valuable by far than common customs posts and frontiers conforming to strategic ideas is the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, [a shared] programme to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together. These are the kinds of things that can be understood in spite of differences of race and language. I spoke just now of "having suffered together" and, indeed, suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and require a common effort.

A nation is therefore a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. It presupposes a past; it is summarized, however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life. A nation's existence is, if you will pardon the

metaphor, a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life. That, I know full well, is less metaphysical than divine right and less brutal than so called historical right. According to the ideas that I am outlining to you, a nation has no more right than a king does to say to a province: "You belong to me, I am seizing you." A province, as far as I am concerned, is its inhabitants; if anyone has the right to be consulted in such an affair, it is the inhabitant. A nation never has any real interest in annexing or holding on to a country against its will. The wish of nations is, all in all, the sole legitimate criterion, the one to which one must always return.

We have driven metaphysical and theological abstractions out of politics. What then remains? Man, with his desires and his needs. The secession, you will say to me, and, in the long term, the disintegration of nations will be the outcome of a system which places these old organisms at the mercy of wills which are often none too enlightened. It is clear that, in such matters, no principle must be pushed too far. Truths of this order are only applicable as a whole in a very general fashion. Human wills change, but what is there here below that does not change? The nations are not something eternal. They had their beginnings and they will end. A European confederation will very probably replace them. But such is not the law of the century in which we are living. At the present time, the existence of nations is a good thing, a necessity even. Their existence is the guarantee of liberty, which would be lost if the world had only one law and only one master.

Through their various and often opposed powers, nations participate in the common work of civilization; each sounds a note in the great concert of humanity, which, after all, is the highest ideal reality that we are capable of attaining. Isolated, each has its weak point. I often tell myself that an individual who had those faults which in nations are taken for good qualities, who fed off vainglory, who was to that degree jealous, egotistical, and quarrelsome, and who would draw his sword on the smallest pretext, would be the most intolerable of men. Yet all these discordant details disappear in the overall context. Poor humanity, how you have suffered! How many trials still await you! May the spirit of wisdom guide you, in order to preserve you from the countless dangers with which your path is strewn!

Let me sum up, Gentlemen. Man is a slave neither of his race nor his language, nor of his religion, nor of the course of rivers nor of the direction taken by mountain chains. A large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm of heart, creates the kind of moral conscience which we call a nation. So long as this moral consciousness gives proof of its strength by the sacrifices which demand the abdication of the individual to the advantage of the community, it is legitimate and has the right to exist. If doubts arise regarding its frontiers, consult the populations in the areas under dispute. They undoubtedly have the right to a say in the matter. This recommendation will bring a smile to the lips of the transcendants of politics, these infallible beings who spend their lives deceiving themselves and who, from the height of their superior principles, take pity upon our mundane concerns. "Consult the populations, for heaven's sake! How naive! A fine example of those wretched French ideas which claim to replace diplomacy and war by childishly simple methods." Wait a while, Gentlemen; let the reign of the transcendants pass; bear the scorn of the powerful with patience. It may be that, after many fruitless gropings, people will revert to our more modest empirical solutions. The best way of being right in the future is, in certain periods, to know how to resign oneself to being out of fashion."[6]

Early conceptions of nation defined it as a group or race of people who shared history, traditions, and culture, sometimes religion, and usually language. The people of a nation generally share a common national identity, and part of nation-building is the building of that common identity. Some distinguish between an ethnic nation, based in (the social construction of) race or ethnicity, and a civic nation, based in common identity and loyalty to a set of political ideas and institutions, and the linkage of citizenship to nationality.

Today the word nation is often used synonymously with state but a state is more properly the governmental apparatus by which a nation rules itself. Max Weber[7] provided the classic definition of the state: "Today, however, we have to say that a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force

6. Renan, Ernest. "What is a Nation?"
7. Max Weber - Politics as a Vocation, 1918.

within a given territory. Note that "territory" is one of the characteristics of the state. Specifically, at the present time, the right to use physical force is ascribed to other institutions or to individuals only to the extent to which the state permits it."

In approaching the question of nation-building, and in particular its relationship to state-building, it is important to keep in mind that this definition specifies the legitimate use of force.

The term nation-building is often used simultaneously with state-building, democratization, modernization, political development, post-conflict reconstruction, and peacebuilding. But each concept is different, though their evolution is intertwined. The concept of nation-building came to be used especially among American political scientists a decade or so after World War II, to describe the greater integration of state and society, as citizenship brought loyalty to the modern nation-state with it.

THE FRENCH EXAMPLE AND ITS LIMITATIONS

The French debate about the nation has been complicated by the existence of two contradictory myths: the myth about the organic nature of the French nation - tracing its history to that of the Gauls, and the myth about the contractual origins of the French state. One can affirm that both myths, while they have existed side by side, have very much defined France's political inclinations in the formulation of the Right and the Left.

The idea that France as a nation rose the legacy of its ethnic past remains the territory of the Right -such as expressed at its most radical by the Front National headed by Marine Le Pen, while the Left holds that France became France-the nation, on the basis of its socio-economic and institutional development.

The Right as it were, cares more about purity of race, than it does about state institutions and the formulation of a socio-political fabric within which communities can find themselves. As for the Left it holds to the theory that democracy sits the bedrock of nation-building.

William Safran, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Colorado Boulder writes in his book: History of European

Ideas, "Most historians stressed the fact that France was among the oldest of nations and the the current political system was transitory, because it was constantly restructured in the interest of the nation; most political scientists insisted that the state shapes the character of the nation., whose members share political values.The Right emphasised nationality, and the Left, citizenship."

Ernest Renan tried to reconcile this French contradiction by arguing that "the nation is a spiritual principle which is based on two things: one is the present, the other in the past; one is the common possession of a rich inheritance of memories, and the other, a common consent, a desire to live together, and the will to help the heritage that each individual has received prevail [in the future."

According to the liberal Jacobin[8] view, voluntary adherence to republican views and principles was all that was needed for a person to be a member of the polity, and hence a part of the nation.

According to the conservative view - which leans more towards authoritarianism, a common will is not enough to grant a person 'nationality'. One has to be a 'proper' member of the nation in order to be entitled to citizenship. Such belonging many have argued, requires commonalities: sharing in the Catholic faith for the conservatives and for the Jacobins, mastery of the French language was enough of a social unifier since it was looked upon as the main vehicle for French culture and France's revolutionary ideology. Readers will note that France's ongoing debate towards immigration and France's position vis a vis Islam is tethered to those old dynamics.

And though such a setup may no longer completely hold due to the evolution of ideas and concepts, France's conceptualisation of the state, nation-building and citizenship remains largely rooted in 1789 Revolution. One could advance that France thought itself a nation on the back of its

8. A Jacobin was a member of the Jacobin Club, a revolutionary political movement that was the most famous political club during the French Revolution (1789–99). In France, Jacobin now generally indicates a supporter of a centralised republican state and strong central government powers and/or supporters of extensive government intervention to transform society.

Revolution.

It was the French Revolution of 1789 which prompted subsequent leaders to promote the need to mould citizenship as both a condition and affirmation of France's newfound national sovereignty.

It will serve readers to remember that in 1860, French was still a foreign language to half of all French children.[9] During the 19th and 20th century, those in charge of the affairs of the state implemented a range of policies with the aim of building commonality among the population and forming what they determined to be 'Frenchmen'. They introduced state controlled education, including compulsory elementary schooling; banned languages other than the 'national language' in schools, religious services and administration; introduced compulsory military service, often with the explicit aim of integrating and mixing individuals from different parts of the country; and extended road and rail links to promote territorial cohesion of movements through structured communication lines.

If France's ambition to become a nation was first born in revolution, it is through a long and tenuous evolutionary process that nation-building was attained.

Eric John Ernest Hobsbawm, the British historian noted in 1990, "states would use the increasingly powerful machinery for communicating with their inhabitants, above all the primary schools, to spread the image and heritage of the 'nation' and to inculcate attachment to it," and that "the official or culture- language of rulers and elites usually came to be the actual language of modern states via public   education   and   other administrative mechanisms."

The 20th century also saw dictators and political elites who built homogeneity by prohibiting local cultures and attempting to impose their ideologies, often by odious means: Nazi Germany, or Franco's Spain remain painful reminders of what coercion, when wielded under the flag of nation-building or nationalism as it was then-labelled, bring about in terms of human cost.

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9. Estimate Weber (1979) p67. Hobsbawm (1990) p60 gives a figure of 12 − 13% of the population who spoke French at the French Revolution.

If nation-states first emerged in the context of the decay of the pre-national dynastic structures of Ancien Régime in Europe - a process itself associated with the broader phenomenon of 'modernity', it may be argued today that we are witnessing a period of equally significant social and cultural change. Whether or not the overarching concept of post-modernity is appropriate or helpful in this respect, terms like post-industrialism and post-colonialism, not to mention post-materialism and post-socialism, are suggestive of a number of related transitional phenomena.

Against this wider background, the nation-state is experiencing the full effects of economic globalisation and the attendant problems of reduced autonomy arguably presage a generalised crisis of political legitimacy.

In this context it is relevant to ask the question whether or not just as in the last century pre-national state structures crumbled in the face of nationalism, so in the late 20th century the nation-state model is itself being superseded.

In the contemporary context of economic and cultural globalisation, it is easy to regard all nations and nationalisms as essentially parochial and exclusive - the recent resurgence of ethnic nationalism in the post-communist successor states has reinforced this image. It is important therefore, to remind ourselves that in the 19th and early 20th centuries the nation-building process often involved a dramatic widening of the cultural, political and spatial horizons of ordinary people, expanding social consciousness beyond the ties of kinship, trade and locality to invoke an 'imagined' community.

In that respect one could assert that if built organically through an evolutionary process nation-building also requires the imposition of an overarching and superseding artificial identity - that of the nation-state, as defined by its elite.

It was Jean-Jacques Rousseau - one of the fathers of the French Revolution who posited that it is unnatural for a majority to rule, for a majority can seldom be organized for united and specific action, and a minority can. If the majority of abilities is contained in a minority of men,

minority government is as inevitable as the concentration of wealth; the majority can do no more than periodically throw out one minority and set up another.[10]

It is pertinent to note that most governments throughout History have been oligarchies - ruled by a minority, chosen either by birth, as in aristocracies, or by a religious organisation, as in theocracies, or by wealth, as in democracies.

And though public belief still holds that democracies are the expression of the will of the people over that of an autocratic elite, it remains nevertheless true that the affairs of the state have been the sole territory of an elite. If the adage: Vox populi, vox dei (the voice of the people is the voice of God) in the sense that no power can draw legitimacy in opposition of the people it claims to rule over holds, it is also true that the Greek model of direct and absolute democracy does not, in the face of reality.

At best, democratic states are in a state of equilibrium in between authoritarianism and populism.

But back to nation-building and the example France put forward.

The role of the state in France's nation-building process has been particularly prominent if compared to its western contemporaries.

The absolutist monarchy of the 17th and 18th centuries may indeed be seen as necessary compensation for the country's linguistic, cultural and geographical diversity, and for the perceived fragility of its land frontiers. The intense political division created by the Revolution provided a further pretext for the preservation of this centralised state apparatus, and successive regimes mistrusted regional identities, not only as potentially disintegrative but also as a possible power base for political opposition. Under the Third Republic, the attempt to create a homogenous national culture was intensified through the agencies of mass schooling and mass-conscription, through the deployment of national symbols and the 'invention' of national traditions, and through the identification of an external enemy in the shape

10. The Lessons of History - Will and Ariel Durant.

of the newly-unified Germany.

National consciousness under absolutism had largely been limited to social elites, and to the regions that were least removed from the capital. The Revolution, by invoking the concept of citizenship and politically mobilising millions of ordinary peasants and town-dwellers, therefore marked a decisive stage in the construction of nationhood.[11]

The social compromise of the Third Republic, based on the property-owning middle-classes and peasantry, was consolidated by rural modernisation, representative democracy and the state-led inculcation of national values, turning "peasants into Frenchmen" as Eugene Weber famously put it.

The emergence and extension of such national consciousness - as part of the process of nation-building throughout the rise of national commonalities, needs to be looked at as gradual process of social and political integration. For example: however alienated and removed workers may have felt under the Third Republic - a period which was marked by the rise of the Bourgeoisie, before WW1, the nation-state as a political reality was an incourturnable reference point.

The work of Emile Zola in that respect holds a mirror to a society in the flux of a profound socio-economic remapping and political realignment.

It is during the Third Republic that France stopped being a state to be reborn a nation, rich of its many communities, each occupying a distinct social, political, and economic space but at the same time united under shared commonalities and a certain degree of fluidity.

Arguably French workers gained a greater understanding of what it meant to be a citizen of France on the back of the Liberation reforms in 1945 and 1946. Women too rose to full citizenship in 1945 when they were granted the right to vote.

It is fair to say that France, while an old democracy, only recently - in

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11. Jenkins B - Nationalism in France: Class and Nations since 1789.

the face of History as a whole, graduated to being a mature nation-state.

Many intellectuals have argued that the new frontier to be conquered as far as nation-building goes would be to 'integrate' immigrants beyond the discrimination they continue to face in civil society. As it were, accessing to the title of citizenship in France has yet to translate to the social sphere. Cognitive bias so far has prevented social homogenization, creating ghettos within an otherwise united national space.

National consciousness may be defined as a politically neutral sense of membership of the national community, based primarily on the recognition that the nation-state is the main institutional framework for the satisfaction of individual and collective aspirations. At a more affective level this may be combined with a sense of 'belonging', an attachment to a familiar spatial environment or 'way of life', and it is at this level that terms like 'national sentiment' or 'patriotism' come into play.

A distinctive feature of the French experience is the significant role of the centralised state in inculcating this sense of nationhood, and the integrationist logic that has consistently underpinned this project, irrespective of the ideological colour of successive regimes.

Modern national citizenship it needs to be noted was an invention of the French Revolution.

In Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany, Rogers Brubaker writes, "The formal delimitation of the citizenry; the establishment of civil equality, entailing shared rights and shared obligations; the institutionalisation of political rights; the legal rationalisation and ideological accentuation of the distinction between citizens and foreigners; the articulation of the doctrine of national sovereignty and of the link between citizenship and nationhood; the substitution of immediate, direct relations between the citizen and the state for the mediated, indirect relations characteristic of the ancien regime - the Revolution brought all these developments together on a national level for the first time."

The Revolution in short, invented both the nation-state and the modern institution and ideology of national citizenship. Just as the invention of the

nation-state presupposed centuries of state-building and the slow growth of national consciousness within the frame of the developing territorial state, so the invention of the modern institution of national citizenship built on the theory and practice of state-membership in the ancien régime.

It is maybe because France's ancien régime was defined by inequalities that France's national consciousness has ambitionned to be defined in its yearning for equality. Liberty, Equality and Fraternity have become etched in the consciousness of every French man and woman, and in many ways, summarise best what it is to be French. However, and this marks the limitation, and many will posit, lagging of France's national discourse, Equality presupposes citizenship and does not, in the French mind, necessary extend to the foreign nationals.

Citizenship was central to the theory and practice of the French Revolution. This can be seen by considering the Revolution successively as a bourgeois revolution; a democratic revolution; a national revolution; and a bureaucratic, state-strengthening revolution. These perspectives are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, but they bring into focus the multiple significance of the French Revolution for the development of the modern institution of national citizenship.

But France's tradition here has had two notable negative effects:

1- In as far as the French nationhood has been shaped more by the state than by spontaneous forces in 'civil society', the present decline in the capacity of that state to fulfil national aspirations risks has caused something of an identity crisis.

2- The integrationist attempt to create a homogeneous national culture is no longer feasible in the context of an increasingly multiethnic, multicultural and pluralist society.

Such observations raise the following question: what is French identity? What is the homogeneous national culture that successive regimes have allegedly sought to construct? And has France reached the limits of its experiment?

Here we are in the force field of nationalism proper as Brian Jenkins puts it in his paper 'From nation-building to the construction of Europe.' The essential point to be made is that 'national identity' in France has never been subject to any comfortable consensus-instead it has been a highly contested area. In 200 years punctuated by war, invasion, and revolutions, issues of national sovereignty and state legitimacy have repeatedly emerged to colour the discourse and imagery of political conflict.

Diverse movements and ideologies have, in such circumstances, presented themselves as the authentic expression of national values, as the true 'patriots', as the legitimate defenders of the 'national interest.'

During the 1848 Revolution, and even more so during the Paris Commune of 1871, the convergence of the themes of social and political emancipation with those of national self-determination gave nationalism a decidedly left-wing coloration.

By the turn of the century, however, popular anti-state nationalism had undergone a complex ideological transformation in the context of opposition to the liberal 'bourgeois' Third Republic, and eventually became identified with an extreme Right that many have seen as proto-fascist in character. This new nationalism was externally aggressive and chauvinist in its call for revenge against Germany, while internally it sought to redefine nationality on deterministic and exclusivist ethnic lines. Racism, especially in the form of anti-semitism, was a key theme, but ethnicity was conceived as much in cultural as in strictly biological terms, allowing for a whole range of 'outsiders' to be identified as hostile to core national values - protestants and freemasons, liberal intellectuals and internationalist socialists.

Then, such integral nationalism promoted the 'nation' as an overriding and unconditional loyalty, as an instrument of collective unity, therefore invoking an authoritarian state which would transcend the divisiveness of both representative democracy and social class struggle.

The concept of 'nation' has been deployed by movements of both Left and Right as a mobilising theme for popular opposition to the prevailing regime. Arguably these forms of anti-state nationalism have never truly

captured the state and translated their value-systems fully into practice - not even during the Vichy regime, when the Far-Right was given free reign, empowered as it was by Nazi Germany.

It was through the agency of the state really that efforts were made to construct a more consensual form of national identity which would transcend such aforementioned polarities. In this respect it is important to recognise that, though the Third Republic adopted the once revolutionary iconography of Marseillaise (national anthem), tricolour and Bastille Day as symbols of nationhood, it did so on the ruins of the Paris Commune and in a spirit of reconciliation which claimed that the Revolution was now complete.

In seeking to build a consensus the Republic inevitably opened itself up to other influences. Tensions and contradictions within the Republican state have allowed a certain dilution of the republican concept of nationhood, and this has reflected the inherent dangers of the 'assimilationist' logic of 'La Republique une et indivisible.' (The Republic, One and Undividable).

The ideal may have been the promotion of equal citizenship in an open and tolerant civic order, but at the same time the insistence on a homogeneous national culture as a necessary basis for that order raises the possibility that some categories - segment of population, may be judged as non-assimilable or unwilling to assimilate, and therefore designated as outsiders, or internal aliens posing a threat to national cohesion.

Such issues have opened France up to a social break and national identity crisis threatening to disintegrate the very nation France's revolutionaries imagined before it could be manifested.