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Narratives of National Identity

Developing Nationalism in Multicultural Societies

Master's Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Tämän päivän kansallismielisten ja identiteettipoliittisten liikkeiden nousun rinnalla ovat monikulttuuristen maiden yhteiskuntarauha koetuksella. Kirjailija Francis Fukuyama on väittänyt, että heikot valtiot ovat heikkojen kansallisten identiteettien tuloksia. Näin ollen hallitukset, jotka tietoisesti rakentavat kansallisuuden tunnetta, pärjäävät paremmin poliittisista haasteista, kuten etnisistä konflikteista. On olemassa esimerkkejä valtioista, jotka ovat tietoisesti pyrkineet luomaan avoimempaa, etnisyyteen tai uskontoon katsomatonta kansallista identiteettiä. Nationalismi on identiteettipolitiikan muoto, johon tavallisten kansalaisten lisäksi myös maiden hallitukset ja eliitti osallistuvat. Kansallisuutta on luotu myös verellä ja pakotuksella, mutta nykypäivänä korostuu kansallista identiteettiä kuvaavat tarinat, eli narratiivit, joilla yritetään korostaa tiettyjä näkökulmia kansakunnan luonteesta ja historiasta, pyrkien usein luomaan yhteenkuuluvuuden tunnetta rikkinäisissä yhteisöissä.

Tämä tutkielma käsittelee kolmessa eri monikulttuurisessa valtiossa esiintyviä kansallisen identiteetin narratiiveja. Teksti tuo esiin identiteetin eri tasoja sekä kansojen ja nationalismin teorioita, joiden läpi katsotaan Singaporen, Yhdysvaltojen ja Etelä-Afrikan maiden tämän hetkistä kulttuuria ja yhteiskuntaa. Empiiristä sisältöä tuo uutisartikkelit, haastattelut, mielipidemittaukset sekä maiden poliitikkojen puheet ja lausunnot. Tutkielma pyrkii selvittämään miten avoimemmat kansallisuuden narratiivit näissä yhteiskunnissa ovat onnistuneet, mitä ne ovat sisältäneet ja miten niihin on reagoitu? Rotuerottelusta ja rasismista traumatisoituneella Yhdysvalloilla ja Etelä-Afrikalla on ollut vaikeinta saada koko kansa sopeutumaan yhteisen identiteetin puolelle. Eritoten Yhdysvalloissa pidetään "kansojen sulatusuunin" kaltaisen narratiivin piilottavan alleen valkoisen enemmistön halun ylläpitää järjestelmää, joka on mustaa väestöä vastaan. Singaporessa rotuharmoniaa valistetaan koulujärjestelmässä ja jännitteitä estetään sensuroinnilla, mutta monet kansalaiset näkevät valtion asettaman arvomaailman yhä negatiivisemmin. Etelä-Afrikassa, kuten myös osin Singaporessa ja Yhdysvalloissa, ihmiset korostavat muuta kuin kansallista identiteettiään.

KEYWORDS: national identity, nationalism, multiculturalism, narration, ethnic groups, United States of America, Singapore, South Africa

1 INTRODUCTION

National identity is traditionally based on such principles as common language, race, ethnicity or religion. This is how many nations have defined themselves, but in an age of globalization and mass immigration, we have seen efforts of reconstruction to the national identities, which were too narrow for the increasingly diverse populations to adopt. Changing the national identity in order to fit the existing reality of the citizens is one of the more powerful ways to create unity and a sense of peoplehood that fosters trust and harmony.

There is evidence now of resurgence in nationalism in the world's political climate, and the success of populist nationalism in both Europe and United States of America of the last decade has surprised many. UK citizens voted to leave the European Union, and other European countries like Hungary, Poland and Turkey have developed towards more authoritative states. Nationalist movements that are gaining momentum often bring out similar narratives of how immigrants are destructive to their national identity and to their economic and social wellbeing, or that the political elite of supranational intitutions such as the European Union are against the interest of their own people.

Meanwhile, in the United States of America, ongoing crises of racial tensions and radicalized social movements, added with the election of a president who has denigrated these movements, presents massive challenges to building a sense of unity and equality under the community that Americans wish to portray as a prime example of a cultural melting pot. Rigid identities always exclude individuals out of the equation. In the United States, it is not just the far right nationalists, but the entire political field that seems to be primarily divided into questions of identities (particularly religion, sex, race and ethnicity) and politics have become wrapped in people's personal view of themselves, creating a culture of political tribalism. People might seek political actions that support their own group out of loyalty, thus neglecting any rational contemplation.

So it is obvious that today's multicultural nations need a more inclusive national identity with shared ideals to create civic solidarity, but has this ever worked? How to bind people emotionally through something so ostensibly vague?

Elsewhere in the world, a small city-state in Southeast Asia called Singapore effectively manages a diverse cosmopolitan community of vastly different ethnicities and religions, seemingly without large-scale social problems, having one of Asia's most innovative economies and no racially or ethnically motivated violence or protests in its streets. South Africa on the other hand, with its massively diverse population of different ethnicities and languages, struggles to leave behind the traumas of the apartheid-era, which segregated the entire society socially and politically. The government is keen to re-build the "rainbow nation" slowly towards a multiethnic, multilingual unity, but weak performance of state institutions and continuing crime and poverty weaken the state's legitimacy in the eyes of South Africans.

When it comes to identities, as the famous scholar Benedict Anderson (1991: 204) phrased; since they cannot be remembered, they must be narrated. Cultural memory is often reconstructed through public discourse. But what are these narratives and who constructs them? Much of it is done by the government, but civil society also takes part in the stories and narratives that people ultimately subscribe to, and which the spreads. "The melting-pot", "rainbow nation", and Singaporean "cosmopolitanism" are all narratives, but how strongly do people relate to them?

Much has been written on the subject of the nations, their history, national identities, the purpose and use of such identities and the methods of building a sense of a nation. But a devotion to a fixed identity can also manifest in hostility to outsiders when individuals are exluded out of the fixed image of one's own kind. Genocides, the holocaust and ethnic cleansings all over the world history has left many with a bad taste of overtly nationalist discourse, particularly of the kind that would emphasize any particular ethnicity. Modern

democracies have recognized the integrity and importance of many other minorities, which are a part of the society's multicultural nature. In nation-states, this has required the building of an inclusive national identity, which morally supports the shared norms and values of a culture, as well as the legitimacy of the state. To do this, states have asserted national narratives, which will be discussed in this thesis.

Human beings seem to have a natural instinct to identify with larger communities. Nationalism is one form of identity politics, which in order to appeal to individuals has to highlight certain unique attributes, which separates one people from another. If these attributes seem uncompelling, other collective identities might take its place. There are many forms of identity groups, which can mobilize people to political action, but few have been historically stronger than nationality or ethnicity. The key for many identities to grow in popularity is is how emotionally appealing they are. Most collective identities will give narratives not just of the character of its members, but of their histories.

1.1 Aim of the thesis

The aim of this thesis is to highlight the narratives of national identity in the target countries, and the approaches to nation-building that have been used in these countries. Singapore, United States of America and South Africa are all nations that have aspired to create civic solidarity through an identity that will not define them through the traditional narratives of ethnic, racial or linguistic communities. In finding out the popular assertions of narratives in these nations, the thesis will examine the suggestion of Francis Fukuyama of how successful democracies rely on strong national identities, wheras weak states are products of weak national identities (2018a: 124-125, 139).

The research questions are: if these diverse societies are held together by a sense of national identity, which in multicultural societies cannot be based on ethnicity; what are the specific

narratives governments and leaders in such nations wish to assert to their diverse people and what other forms of nation building have these countries utilized to strengthen those narratives? Furthermore, if these narratives have been ineffective, what alternative narratives have rised from the people or the civil society, which may deviate from the ones proposed by state authorities and could assert a different story of the nation in question?

If nations are indeed social constructions, as has been the consensus of many scholars, then this thesis will discuss the motives of those doing the constructing, along with practical conditions that affect the effectiveness of such national imagining. It is expected that multicultural societies require narratives as inclusive as possible but naturally to create any collective identity one might need to mirror its own distinctiveness in the face of "others". This naturally leads to some level of exclusion, so that which is excluded should be noted as well.

1.2 Context and material

Three English-speaking countries are studied in this thesis, because of their unique histories, multicultural societies and relatively distant positions. Firstly, the small city-state of Singapore in southeast Asia, as an example of largely different political solutions in nation building, since their vastly diverse ethnic and religious population are kept in harmony partly through rigid ethnic classification systems, censorship and other authoritarian measure. It is questionable whether Singaporeans themselves embrace the kind of national identity their government presents to them. Secondly, United States of America, because it is at the moment on the front of every news medium due to their seemingly divided political system, and race-based inequality issues that have inspired activism even outside of the nation's borders. Thirdly, the highly diverse South Africa, which continues to battle against the scars of the racial segregation of its apartheid history. Although figures such as Nelson Mandela were constructing as inclusive and equal kind of

nationalism as possible, new types of trends in the politics of the African National Congress might indicate towards a future regression to ethnic nationalism.

With all of these three countries there have been negative notions to existing national identity, or it simply has not been built strongly, or early enough to settle. This arguably has led to some of the population opting to emphasize their alternative collective identities, such as ethnicity, which sometimes results in ethnic nationalism. The three countries from three different continents highlight different historical exercises in nation building, which will perhaps enlighten their current circumstances.

There is a vast amount of research already done in the subject of nationalism, some of which touch the cultural development of these countries, and I have chosen to present some of those findings in this paper. Surveys and polls have been added to give some data that would indicate the citizens' emotional commitment to their nations, overall happiness, trust in the government and so forth; which will be interpreted in the light of the light of empirical material. Popular news outlets from both inside the target countries and outside will provide the material in order to prove or disapprove the theories made by the researchers and pundits, which I will introduce in the thesis.

There are also many concepts such as that of identity politics, multiculturalism, assimilation and other historical backgrounds to nationalism, which I feel are important to explain. I will return often to the theories and concepts presented by Francis Fukuyama, who has discussed in length about the importance of an inclusive national identities in diverse societies, particularly in his book *Identity: the Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (2018a), where he seeks to make a case of how modern day identity politics are shattering democratic societies.

The effectiveness of any narrative will be valued by the evidence from literature, news media, interviews, polls and studies, which indicate the kind of relation citizens have to

their national identity, compared to other collective identities they may possibly feel closer to. News articles both from domestic sources and foreign countries to further add to the discussion of narrating the nature of a given nation.

2 DEFINING IDENTITY

Identity politics is a popular term in the writings of particularly American pundits and researchers, but perhaps less frequent in European discourse, and deserves a cohesive definition. It stems from a more modern understanding of identity as such, the social categories that it reflects and narratives that are used to manipulate people's sense of self-worth for political purposes. Identity politics incites people to demand recognition of their dignity, which is seemingly a healthy endeavor in any society. But its side-effects have brought upon it a vast amount of critical perspectives.

2.1 Individual identity

Bhikhu Parekh, a professor of political philosophy, finds that identity requires interpretation and judgement, and individual's identity can be explored by questioning what he believes is what makes him who he is, how he views himself in the world and what makes him distinctive to any other person. Parekh divides the individual identity into three dimensions: the personal, the social and the human. (Parekh 2008: 9)

Personal identity includes the sense of self, obtained through unique experiences in life and the inherent traits of our minds and bodies and our often changing relationship with them. Personal identity is the intellectual and moral framework one acts by, giving guidance through life and serving as the basis for one's integrity, Parekh explains. Parekh notes however, that unlike certain advocates of identity politics would argue, no personal identity is beyond criticism, and the respect for all personal identities are not unconditional. This notion would be relevant when someone's self-definition somehow negatively affects other's lives. (2008: 10-14)

The range of social identification is practically endless and could be based on any human characteristic, trait or practice, no matter how trivial. But certain features or relations become socially significant for various reasons as Parekh explains. Being a woman, is not just biological category, since it also holds social meaning in our society. Patterns of behavior, qualities and occupational suitability is expected of them. Similarly in a racially conscious society, social significance is given to blacks and whites, both subjected to certain norms and stereotypes. Parekh calls these categories social identities, because of their social significance, which identifies and defines them as certain kinds of persons with certain kinds of expectations. (Parekh 2008: 15)

Identities are in constant change and Parekh lists some of the most recent social identities that have emerged in the West as those of the adolescent, the elderly, the consumer and the taxpayer. Certain identities can be heavily 'scripted', Parekh notes, and one would be smart no to be defined by such narrow guidelines of behavior. Gender, as a social identity is particularly curious case as many societies in the world have less varied identities available for women than for men. They are also more heavily scripted, from which Parekh concludes that the experience of the social identity is much different for women than it is for men. (2008: 15-16)

Every system is an articulated system of identities, Parekh says. Social identities are important for the society in terms of conformity and power, and it seeks to direct people to internalize their social identities to the extent that they define, live and think themselves through those patterns. Parekh calls this 'moral engineering', something which brings a certain amount of predictability and order. This makes a culture more coherent and communities more easily governable, but it can be a threat to freedom. This is often the point made by the society's minorities who feel their identities are not being recognized, and or who see their identities are being inferiorized or marginalized by the society. (2008: 16-17)

Unlike with traditional societies with rigidly scripted social identities, in modern societies the individual's own construction of identity is more encouraged, which has created broader spectrum of identities to choose from and to relate with them. Parekh takes the example of 'Jew' as a social category. It is associated with certain stereotypes and attitudes, which for many actual Jews contain zero meaning, as individuals may not always construct their identity according to the social identities they are born into, because some other identities may define them more. (2008: 17-18)

People can (and often do) also withhold several interacting identities, which bring with them several perspectives to life and the world around us, Parekh explains. Every social identity connects us to some group of people and its historical narrative, giving us meaning in life. The plurality of these identities are bound to give multiple viewpoints and sources of meaning, through which one develops the narrative of his or her life. (2008: 24)

Human identity comes from the recognition of this unique specie of human beings as a morally significant attribute, which is more than a mere biological fact. Identifying oneself on what is the purpose of human life and acknowledging for example what could be considered inhuman behavior, is an important feature of our self-identification, Parekh states. Some idea of human identity is evoked when we speak of human rights, human dignity or humankind. To Parekh, human identity presupposes that humans can look beyond their contingent social identities, and can identify with each other outside their social roles and place in the society. (2008: 26-27)

2.2 Politics of collective identities

As every society is separated by a dominant set of values, beliefs and practices it expects its members to subscribe to, it inevitably privileges certain ways of life, and social groups over others, Parekh explains. This then provokes the groups who feel their identity is

unacknowledged, and who feel they are forced to conform to mainstream society's norms to demand recognition in order to protect their dignity. Women have argued how the current patriarchal culture sexualizes and inferiorizes them, devalues their experiences enforces norms set by men and restricts their freedom of self-expression. Sexual minorities accuse prevailing sexual norms to devalue their form of sexual fulfillment as well as depicting them as something reminiscent of an illness because of how they deviate from the heterosexual "normality". Blacks, working classes, indigenous peoples and religious minorities express similar views of being invisible in the society and having to follow codes of conduct unsuitable to their need and even hurtful to their dignity. (2008: 31)

The demand from these identity groups is related not just to equal civil or economic rights but to the necessity of respect and public legitimacy, Parekh concludes. And that sense of a lack of respect and recognition necessitates organization and collective pursuit of those goals. Precisely because the relevant goal is the recognition of identity, the organizations and demands are based on a shared sense of collective identity. (2008: 31-32)

The politics of collective identity is furthermore expressed through rhetoric of liberation (women's lib for example), which implies a position of oppression and tyranny under the dominant norms, and also the language of pride. To use phrases such as "gay pride" or "black and proud", even when unalterable biological traits are on some level not merits to be proud of, is derived from two motivations, Parekh explains. It is intended to resist the perceived inferiority and shame coming from the outside culture, and it is also a way of identifying with others and understanding the historical and predominant struggles and achievements collectively as part of one's identity. (2008: 32)

2.3 Identity politics

The term *identity politics* came to surface in the cultural politics of the 1980s and 90s, decades after psychologist Erik Erikson had popularized the concept of identity. Despite the fact that individuals throughout history have been in conflict with their surrounding societies, it is a modern perception that people would see the authentic inner self intrinsically valuable and the outer society as something systematically wrong that needs to conform to the those people's needs, Francis Fukuyama states. It is thus never the inner self of the individual that needs to conform to the rules and practices of the society, but the society that is required to change. (Fukuyama 2018a: 8-9)

This inner self, as Fukuyama describes, is the basis of human dignity but its nature is variable and it changes over time. Importantly, the inner sense of dignity asks for recognition from outside, and it needs others to acknowledge its sense of worth. Such public acknowledgment is crucial, as the case may be that people may denigrate or unacknowledge one's existence. Self-esteem develops through the esteem of others. (Fukuyama 2018a: 10)

Struggle for recognition is a fundamental motivation in human history. Since people naturally crave for recognition, this modern sense of identity morphs into identity politics, where individuals demand public recognition of their worth. Many political struggles therefore go under the umbrella of identity politics, from democratic revolutions to new social movements, nationalism, or Islamism, Fukuyama lists. (2018a: 10)

Contemporary politics are affected by the economic inequalities of an age of globalization, but these economic grievances are more heartfelt as they are connected with the feelings of disrespect and the idea of indignity, Fukuyama argues. Fukuyama's insight is that the economic motivation is never merely about the accumulation of wealth and resources, but

as much or more about the status and respect money can buy in the modern world. (2018a: 11)

The rise of social movements in the 1960s United States changed the society by making people think of their own lives more group-consciously, awakening political discussion more from the point of view of the identity group they were part of. The recognition of a person's inner worth on the basis of their identity became an essential objective. At that time these marginalized groups that entertained political activism were based on race and gender. Although the term identity politics became more present since then (particularly in the United States), nationalist and religious identity movements had practiced similar strategies before. (Fukuyama 2018a: 107)

An important scholar on the subject of politics of recognition is Charles Taylor, who also views that the politics of equal recognition has seen a change due to the modern notion of identity, in what he calls the "politics of difference". For the supporters of the original politics of dignity, the aim for a difference-blind society is a virtue that the politics of difference considers as a subtle form of discrimination from a hegemonic culture, as it demands the recognition of the unique identity of the individual that should not be assimilated to the dominant identity. The discourse of politics of difference embraces particularity, and the distinctness of the individual or group. (Taylor 1994: 37-43)

What is described here is a trend of narration that is often seen in multicultural societies, which will be discussed later. To claim that the surrounding society in its "neutral" difference-blindedness is discriminative or homogenizing is one narrative, whether it holds much truth or not. In countries such as United States of America and South Africa today, one can hear discourse of persisting racism that is not been addressed publicly. Because of their history of segregation and oppression towards black people, groups might reasonably argue for preferential treatment in order to level the playfield, after been put in a worse position from the start.

Professor Camilla Orjuela also notes that while politicization for any identity is possible, but the ones that get mobilized in violent conflicts are identities related to ethnicity, religion and nation. Identity politics can either become the politics of domination, when a state imposes certain national identity through such issues as establishing official languages, cultural and religious symbolism or unequal access to political power, employment and resources. Or it can become the politics of resistance, when marginalized groups mobilize and seek rights and power in the name of their group identity. In this way, a state's ethnic nationalism will be resisted by ethnic nationalism from excluded groups; the two nationalisms thus encouraging polarization between identity groups, Orjuela observes. (Orjuela 2014: 754-755)

3 NATIONAL IDENTITY

The focus of this thesis is in the narratives that involve nation building, which means creating national identity. Simple existence inside territorial boundaries does not foster a feeling of belonging to one people, or a sense of fraternity under one nation. State leaders have understood the importance of national identity in creating a functional societies with people so loyal to their country, that they would be even willing to die for them.

Often a nationhood is created after the establishment of a state. Sometimes an idea of a "nation" existed previous to its creation, but often in history nation building starts through violence. Fukuyama (2015: 322) notes that a significant problem for states of sub-Saharan Africa where many independent states were colonial creations with arbitrary borders that did not contain any single ethnic or linguistic community. As administrative entities inside larger empires the people in countries such as South-Africa grew to learn how to live with one another, but without a sense of shared culture or common identity.

Much has been said of the nature of nationalism and nations, some of which will be presented in this chapter. Certain concepts and theories to building national narratives will be helpful, as well as few detailed looks into the efforts of nationalism in history.

3.1 Theorizing of nations

Few have been more influential in the study of nations and nationalism than Benedict Anderson, an Irish historian who famously published *Imagined Communities* in 1983, which offered an original take on the discussion of nations and their nature. A sense of national community to Anderson, is indeed an imagined, mental construct. Anything outside a primordial village with its face-to-face contacts must be so, since one never meets

the vast majority of his countrymen, yet still views the nation as a deep, horizontal comradery. In other words, existing as one unique community. (Anderson 1983: 48-50)

Rudolf De Cillia, Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak (1999: 154) explain how Anderson argued that print capitalism in particular enhanced the development of national languages, as common news content in a newspaper gave not only relevant information of the nation's situation, but conveyed a powerful sense of belonging. Citizens who are reading the same newspapers, listening to same radio channels and watching the same television programmes felt that they were consuming this information together as a community.

In today's media one could add the vast amount of social media, videos, blogs, vlogs as well as films and novels to the myriad of ways where symbols of nationhood are presented. Nations are considered as unique and separate from those other nations outside one's borders, and they do not identify strongly with the humanity as a whole. Distinctiveness is always important.

Another important aspect in the constructions of nations is highlighting of the existence of common history, which Anderson's themes of memory and forgetting touches. A collective memory is born from the selected memories of past events, which are considered essential for the country's history and character (De Cillia, Reisigl & Wodak 1999: 154). Countries can and have, in other words, chosen to emphasize certain memories over others in order to build the narrative they want to believe in. The stories that are told of the nation carry the meaning of our nations, and citizens actively take part in the creation of this national culture (De Cillia et al. 1999: 155).

There are certain schools of thought that oppose Anderson's modernist approach, says Alex J. Bellamy (2018: 8), who would rather view nations and national identities to have existed in diverse times and places long before the supposed construction of nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Most famously, Anthony D. Smith's "ethno-symbolist"

approach argues that national identity derives from an ethnic core, where the most important component is the shared historical memory that would reflect a sense of continuity, shared history and common destiny (and all this related to a specific territory) (Bellamy 2018: 9). Roots of the nation and nationalism to scholars like Smith, therefore lies in the subjective beliefs of shared histories and common destinies.

Professor Yael Tamir (2019: 420-421) explains that many scholars choose to define nationalism as a phenomenon of social, cultural and political ingredients that are by nature so particular that they cannot be generalized or theorized, which has caused an absence of nationalism from theoretical spotlight for a long time. It was only after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of Soviet Union, when a massive increase in new states brought the discourse of ”politics of recognition” and nationalism to the theoretical world.

Theoretical discussion was still focusing more on the discourse of liberal democracy or identity politics, but present political developments that have led to the resurgence of nationalism, has made it a difficult subject to avoid. Despite the acknowledgement of the importance of nations, the concept has remained ambiguous, because no one has been able to sufficiently define their intrinsic nature, if there is such a thing. (Tamir 2019: 421, 423)

3.1.1 Four paths to national identity

Francis Fukuyama sees that there are four paths or approaches, in which national identity has been created. The first three of these paths have involved violent forces. The first is the moving or eliminating of populations to achieve a homogenous community. In practice this has meant sending settlers to new land, forcibly evicting people living in those lands, or wiping them out by murder. Ethnic cleansing, as it was known after the events of the Balkan wars, was something that many countries have done in the past. A common example is the United States, where settlers violently removed and killed off most of the

indigenous populations of the territory of today's northern America, in which they moved into. (Fukuyama 2018a: 140-141)

The second path is the moving of borders to fit certain linguistic or cultural populations. This has manifested historically through unifications or separations (declarations of independence for example). The dynasties of Austro-Hungarian Empire and Ottoman Empire were constructed without much attention to their cultural identities, Fukuyama points out. After the nationalist movement strenthened after the French Revolution, larger political units began breaking apart and more ethnolinguistically homogeneous nations emerged from the old empires. A more recent dissolution of a multicultural empire was that of the collapse of Soviet Union. Extension of borders in this regard have been the unifications of Italy and Germany, for example. (Fukuyama 2015: 192)

Third path is to assimilate minority populations into the culture of an existing ethnic or linguistic group. Immigrants (or their offspring) moving to United States have had to learn English in order to better fit into the dominant culture and be able improve their socioeconomic status, Fukuyama explains. The same could be said of Singapore, where although everyone speaks at least one language that represents their ethnic origin, still are required to study and master English. In China 90 percent of the population are allegedly Han Chinese, but what might seem like an ethnic homogeneity of the nation was a product of over three thousand years of cultural and biological assimilation, adds Fukuyama. (2018a: 141)

The fourth, and maybe the most crucial one, is the reshaping of identities to fit existing characteristics of the society. As nations are socially constructed entities and those who do the constructing, have the power to deliberately shape identities to suit certain characteristics and habits. Sometimes, creating a new language for example has been a way to unify highly diverse societies, as was done by the founders of Indonesia and Tanzania, Fukuyama says. Furthermore, citizenship and residency rules, immigration laws are

extremely important, as well as the curricula used in public education to teach about the nation's history. This fourth path also considers the vast amount of stories that reflect "peoplehood", seen in art such as music, poetry, films and ordinary people who reflect on their origin. (2018a: 141-142)

All nations today are historically a combination of these paths, whether they have been exercised peacefully or with violence and coercion. Some of the mechanism are clearly more top-down and political as they are constructed by the state authorities, while others are bottom-up processes initiated by the spontaneous actions of the population. Identities will not endure if these two processes do not complement each other. (Fukuyama 2015: 192)

But the latter two paths, according to Fukuyama (2018a: 142-143), are what contemporary liberal democracies need to utilize if they want to define an inclusive national identity befitting of the existing diversity that will also help assimilate newcomers to that identity. This supposition along with the theory provided will be reflected in studying the narratives that have been created in Singapore, United States of America and South Africa later on.

3.2 Importance of national identity today

Fukuyama claims that countries, which lack a sense of clear national identity, often find themselves in political turmoil or even civil war. He makes examples of Middle eastern countries like Yemen, Libya, and Syria. Likewise, countries such as Kenya and Nigeria, despite maintaining certain stability, are religiously and ethnically divided due to weak sense of national identity and they show high levels of corruption and poverty as well as a failed economic development. (Fukyama 2018a: 124-126)

On the other end of the spectrum are countries such as Korea, Japan and China who all had well-developed national identities and have not needed to settle internal questions during times of modernization and opening to international trade. They have been more capable to jump back from various conflicts through traditions of statehood and common national purpose, Fukuyama says (2018a: 126). National identity, while it starts from the shared belief in the legitimacy of the country's political system, also connects to culture and values of a society. Stories people tell themselves to explain where they come from, what they celebrate and what it takes to be a member of their community.

Interestingly, Fukuyama also suggests that successful democracies in Europe and elsewhere, have benefited from historical nation-building projects that were accomplished by violent or non-democratic ways. Countries such as Indonesia and Tanzania, which are seen as relatively successful democracies today, were considerably more authoritarian in their early stages, when national identities were being built for them. Fukuyama finds it hard for anyone to start building national narratives (nor declaring new national languages) in Nigeria or Kenya, for example, since no-one would be given that authority. (Fukuyama 2015: 333)

Fukuyama recognizes the importance of diversity for societies, whether based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation, and the positive effects that exposure to diversity has on people in terms of innovation, creativity, excitement and even resilience towards diseases due to genetic diversity (2018a: 126-127). But diversity in itself is not an unalloyed good, as Fukuyama explains, since the diversity in Afghanistan and Syria has caused violence and conflict, or in Kenya where diversity has deepened the divisions between ethnic groups and triggered political corruption. Similar ethnic diversity resulted in the dissolving of Austro-Hungarian Empire (2018a: 128).

To Fukuyama, national identity acquired a bad reputation due to the exclusive, ethnically based and illiberal form of the ethno-nationalism taking place during early 1900s, but this

does not diminish the potential value of the concept of national identity. An inclusive sense of national identity built around liberal and democratic political values helps to maintain a successful modern political order, Fukuyama insists. National identity plays a factor in physical security as well as the quality of government. In systemically corrupt societies, Fukuyama explains, politicians and bureaucrats seek to divert public resources to their own ethnic group, region, political party, tribe or family as they are disinterested in the community's general interests. (2018a: 128-129)

Another point Fukuyama brings up is the facilitation of economic development. People are more willing to work for the country's behalf if they take pride of it. South Korea, Japan and China (with strong national identities) have elites who are committed to bringing wealth to their home countries and less interested on enrichening themselves, at least during early decades of rapid economic growth, Fukuyama views. A mentality of public-directness that is less common in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East or Latin America. Identity groups based on ethnicity or religion are found to use their access to state power generally for the betterment their own. (2018a: 128-129)

Immigration, along with the refugee problem has been the policy issue, which has brought the biggest challenge for national identity, and the rise of populist nationalism in United States and Europe is the right wing's countering reaction for it. Levels of migrants are unprecedently high in many wealthier countries of Europe, and United States has approximately 11 million undocumented immigrants inside their borders. (2018a: 131, 133)

Populists in Europe speak for the restoration of sovereignty in their home countries, opposing the legislation enforced by European Union. Fukuyama describes how one of the main objectives for populists is to take back their country and restore the traditional sense of national identity they believe is being threatened. However, it is ambiguous what country they are trying to take back, and what exactly constitutes an individual into being part of a national community. Notably, even the American Constitution does not give the answer to

who the American people should be, Fukuyama argues (2018a:136). This naturally leaves room for contradiction interpretations.

3.3 Volksgeist

In Kwame Anthony Appiah's (2018) view, a nation is a group of people who both view themselves as sharing ancestry as well as caring about it as a matter of fact. This idea of common descent may be imaginary sometimes, and caring about its existence does not always lead to people becoming aspired to create states as there are nationalities that are not yet willing to live under their own governments in their own nation-states. (Appiah 2018: 76)

The Romanticism of late eighteenth century Europe brought new narratives and ideals to national characters, thus strengthening nationalism. National awakenings were present all over. Appiah calls the phenomenon Volksgeist, a term to describe the celebration of the spirit of the folk, borrowed from German philosophy. But not all countries have managed to successfully create their own unifying Volksgeist, with one history and culture. Appiah describes how countries like Singapore and Ghana, along with many countries subjected to colonialism decided to stick with English as their governmental language, because it would not aggravate any particular ethnicity inside that nation. Similarly, many East African countries prefer Swahili precisely because the 50-100 million people who speak it do not associate it with their ethnicity. The language of Twi, spoken by a vast majority of Ghanaians, would not have been swallowed easily if established as the country's official language, as it would bring back the memory for the history of the Asante Empire, which ruled in the country before the British. (Appiah 2018: 82, 101)

Appiah (2018: 88) stresses that people neither now nor ever, have lived in monocultural, monolingual or monoreligious nation-states. Even Japan, where 99 percent of the people

identifies as Japanese, have external influencers like the fact that their second-largest religion is Buddhism (from India) and that their script originates from Chinese. Nations are inventions, and they keep getting reinvented, with shared stories that produce the feelings of pride and loyalty in order to bind the people so they can live a common life together.

3.4 Distinction of civic and ethnic nationalism

There is also a distinction between a concept of an civic national identity, which is considered as something voluntaristic (meaning it can be acquired by choice) and ethnic national identity, where citizenship is understood to be something inherited as a birthright (Stephan Ortmann 2009: 25). It is obvious, that leaders of multiethnic states do not choose wisely if they focus on an ethnic identity, if it excludes significant amount of the population outside, be they minorities or not. André Lecours (2000: 155) describes how civic nationalism does not define a nation with cultural markers, but rather defines one through territorial and legal dimensions, in other words a community of laws.

On a more detailed note; ethnic nationalism, as it does not allow individuals to choose their membership in the nation, thinks of the nation as an organic entity or a natural social system. From ethnic nationalism, you get culturally homogeneous states, as it does not withstand multicultural and multilingual states. This is not the case with civic nationalism, which considers a nation to be a community of laws, the commitment to political-legal framework is the only actual requirement for the membership. (Lecours 2000: 154-155)

The distinction between the two nationalisms have been connected repeatedly with the perspective of development between modern and traditional societies, representing a peculiar dichotomy of the modern and the traditional (Lecours 2000: 155). This model has been criticized for being overtly simplistic, and in a way representing a dichotomy between East (“primitive” ethnic nationalism) and West (more “sophisticated” civic nationalism) (Tamir 2019: 425).

According to Yael Tamir (2019), the distinction was meant to portray a higher and lower form of nationalism, thus signifying the moral supremacy of the West. Western nationalism needed a solid middle-class that could create the civic spirit to a nation, where as in the East, imperial autocrats ruled the submissive citizens repressively. Eastern European perspective, Tamil explains, is that the ethnic aspects of nationalism is inspired from the fallen empires of the West, where multiethnic and multilingual communities made way for nations with cultural and linguistic uniformity. This type of cultural homogeneity was portrayed in the East as the means to secure national self-determination. (Tamir 2019: 425-426)

Tamir criticizes the "political blindness" of the liberal West, along with scholars like Fukuyama, who at one point in time (after the fall of the Soviet Union), cherished the alleged victory of liberal democracy in an age of post-nationalism, despite the fact the only in the year 1991 the world witnessed the birth of 11 new nations, which all received international recognition of their right to independence. Tamir considers that civic ideals never replaced the ethnic ones, the way liberals of the West wished it would, and that this illusion would hide the true nature of nationalism. (Tamir 2019: 427)

3.5 History of de-nationalizing in the West

The two world wars Europe went through in the twentieth century was considered by the founders of European Union to have predicated on exclusive ethnic definitions of national identity, Fukuyama explains. European Coal and Steel Community was created in 1951 and was at the time meant to prevent German rearmament and nourishing trade and economic cooperation. It later developed into the European Union, whose mission Fukuyama argues, was to "deliberately weaken national identities at the member state level in favour of a "post-national" European consciousness"; this as a solution to the traumas of the ethno-nationalism of Nazi Germany. In its early decades, celebrating one's own national identity

within the EU was disapproved of, particularly for countries with fascist pasts. National flags or national anthems were not waved and sung in Germany and Spain. (Fukuyama 2018a: 143-144)

Leaders of EU were unable to construct an alternative identity, however. Single European citizenship was not created. Symbols of state identity and nation building such as flag and anthem came late and no common civic education was built for the diverse members in the union. A significant failure to Fukuyama was the democratic accountability of the EU itself, as the more powerful institutions in the union are not directly answerable to the people, and the European parliament with directly elected MEPs had limited powers. The old national identities persisted through time, while more grievances were felt towards out-of-touch elites of EU, who only spoke of an ever-closer union. According to Fukuyama, the euro crisis further distanced the northern and southern members of the EU from each other, as Germany imposed crushing austerity towards Greece in an episode, which highlighted national differences bluntly. (Fukuyama 2018a: 144-145)

The one major symbolic reminder binding people to the European Union is its common currency: the euro. Eurobarometer data have shown also that political and social elite have much more support for EU as a nation-building project, than the larger public, for whom the EU is a rather distant community, more so than their own nation-state, says Thomas Risse (2002: 3). The euro increases the reality of the "imagined community" that is Europe, along with free movement of the Schengen system and Erasmus exchange programs.

But to illustrate the strength of nationalism, Great Britain never took this step towards European integration, and their citizens have shown to identify exclusively with their own nation-state. In fact, British elites have continued to celebrate English distinctiveness, unlike countries like Germany and Italy, who after the Second World War have incorporated more of the Europeanness in their identity. The British dominant identity discourse could not accept the euro, and parliamentary debates on the matter at the time

were full of references to ”nation-state identity”, and arguments related to identity were stressed heavily by opposers of European Monetary Union in tabloid press. (Risse 2002: 16-18)

Britain’s decision to depart from the European Union in June 2016 was, according to Fukuyama, based on the question of identity rather than economic reasoning. The country’s history in such times as battling for their sovereignty against the French dynasty and the Spanish Armada, as well as the political struggles during the Civil War of the 1600s, add up to the scepticism the British have for ”the Continent” and its institutions. The sovereignty could not be so easily given up, and the Brexiteers insisted on not submitting to the modern day slavery of the European Union. Evidently, this type of rhetoric worked. (Fukuyama 2018a: 152-153)

4 BETWEEN MULTICULTURALISM AND ASSIMILATION

Multiculturalism was used to describe societies that were de facto diverse, but it also means the political program that values each separate culture equally, specifically regarding cultures and lived experiences that had been invisible or undervalued in the past (Fukuyama 2018a: 111). It is a strategy that governments with diverse populations sometimes have utilized, in order to make people of different cultures and ethnicities feel recognized as a separate identity and to celebrate these differences. Singapore, in particular has promoted this type of ideology in its governing, which this paper will discuss more closely later.

The opposing view would be the melting pot – assimilationist perspective that has been popular historically in the United States. That is to say, that no matter what background you have, you are expected to conform into the values and ideals of the nation, in order to integrate. The question is, to what extent should people of different backgrounds and cultures be required to assimilate in to the dominant culture, and what requirements should democracies have for obtaining full citizenship?

4.1 Assimilation model and the pushback on multiculturalism

United States of America has long celebrated its status as a cultural melting pot, yet it has among many others, adopted multicultural policies in response to vast diversity inside its borders (Murphy 2012: 30-42). But the cultural changes these policies would come with a lot of controversy and criticism, as it is considered by some to be against the idea of American national identity.

Arthur M. Schlesinger (1992: 212), writer of the work *Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* in 1992, believes that there is virtue in the values of integration and assimilation, and that only a common purpose can bind people of different backgrounds

together, so that tribal hostilities would not drive them apart. Schlesinger was an adamant supporter of the assimilationist "melting pot" ideology, and a vocal critic of multiculturalism.

Schlesinger sees that the breaking of multiethnic nations such as the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, India and South Africa were caused by matters of ethnicity, while only United States has managed to give its diverse people sufficiently compelling reasons to see themselves as part of the same nation. United States was a multiethnic country from its birth, and people who immigrated to the country were expecting to assimilate, wanting to leave their past behind, Schlesinger says. As for the history of slavery, Schlesinger admits the curse of racism to be the great failure of the American experiment, which still affects American life, but believes that even non-white Americans contributed to the American identity, giving its culture and society form. (Schlesinger 1992: 212-213)

The "cult of ethnicity", Schlesinger writes, that came after the Second World War, emphasized ethnicity in all nations including the United States, as the foremost defining experience of all Americans. All people were to be classified by ethnic and racial criteria, and historic theory of America would receive a new narrative. As the supporters of this perspective (which Schlesinger calls militants of ethnicity) have asked for the changing of the curriculum to public education to celebrate and strengthen ethnic origins and identities, Sclesinger views it as separatism, which will focus on difference and antagonisms that will divide the society apart. (1992: 213-214)

Schlesinger (1992: 215) brings up the current fragmentation of university campuses as an area of concern. Black student unions, black dormitories or black business and law societies among other exclusive communities are a product of institutionalized separatism, causing students of different "race" not to mix in with each other, as certain activities are labeled black or white. Another separatist manifestation is the bilingualism movement, Schlesinger (1992: 216) writes, born from the mass immigration from Spanish-speaking countries. This

too, has caused more segregation than integration as to Schlesinger it encourages Hispanic-Americans to isolate into their own groups and not integrate with the larger society. Schlesinger seems convinced that monolingual education and one common language are necessary bonds for national cohesion in a heterogeneous nation such as United States, thus institutionalized bilingualism would be another threat to America's unity (1992: 216-217).

This ethnic ideology then asserts that the American experience is more or less about belonging in one or another ethnic group in United States. Pride from a particular cultural past or contributions to the American society are acceptable attributes, but if minorities pledge their primary allegiance to a smaller identity group, it hurts the sense of national identity keeping the larger community together, Schlesinger argues. (1992: 217)

Schlesinger met heavy criticism for such views thirty years ago, accused of trying to maintain white male privilege and domination through distortions of reality. Jesse M. Vázquez (1993: 3-4) finds Schlesinger's vision of America to sideline the atrocities such as slavery, continued marginalization of minorities, genocidal practices against Native Americans and exclusionary immigration policies, downplaying them as mere deviations from the American dream and not addressing them as integral part of the nation's social, cultural and economic history. The remembering of these stories is important to Vázquez, as it is to many others. Forgetting them or trivializing them in the collective memory of the Americans would suggest an incomplete picture of America's past.

To Vázquez, Schlesinger does not see the dishonesty of Schlesinger single narrative of the American story, when he denounces ethnic studies and the educational reform that was present in 1990s United States. In Schlesinger mind, anyone interested with exploring different aspects of racial and cultural history of America is some zealot, part of the cult of ethnicity that wants to disunite America. Vázquez believes Schlesinger's prominence in public discourse is part of a trend in the United States, where people rather listen the

outraged respond to the outrageous, particularly in morning talk shows and cosmopolitan newspapers. (Vázquez 1999: 7-9)

Vázquez believes Schlesinger to be highly concerned of the changing demographics of the United States, as Schlesinger has suggested the closing of borders if anti-assimilationist trends continue to put American identity at risk. This strengthens the perception that immigration policies are pushed on by racial and ethnic preoccupations, which further affect race relations. Vázquez sees Schlesinger feeding distortions of history ethnic studies and concept of multiculturalism compellingly to American citizens, while presenting his own ideological beliefs in his works. (1999: 10-12)

The vast evidence of the harsh reality for today's marginalized groups in America put Schlesinger's vision of the nation's "uniting identity" into a questionable light, but perhaps he simply believed in embracing positive narrative that could alleviate persisting racial tensions. Francis Fukuyama (2018a: 170) argues that the identity politics on the left have sought to undermine the nation's story by emphasizing victimization, implying that such discrimination and systematic exclusion are "intrinsic to the country's DNA", giving the country of narrative of endless conflict and oppression. There is something similar in the perspectives of Fukuyama and Schlesinger.

Fukuyama suggests fostering an alternative, progressive narrative about overcoming barriers and ever-broadening circles of people whose dignity have been recognized by the United States, and a diversity, which has adopted an inclusive creedal national identity built on substantive ideas such as constitutionalism or human equality. In relation to immigration, Fukuyama argues that the real focus should be directed on how to better assimilate immigrants to such an identity. (2018a: 170-171)

4.2 Immigration policies and citizenship

The assimilation angle supported by Arthur M. Schlesinger is echoed by Francis Fukuyama (2018a: 167), who offers a solution to fighting against the identity politics and the polarization that happens in Europe and its rise of populist far-right and the immigration crises: changes to citizenship laws and to the idea of national identity.

Fukuyama considers the EU too weak to enforce such laws, so the actions must be done by the individual countries. One reform would be to change the privileging of one ethnicity over another. Meaning that being born into the country should automatically permit citizenship, instead of through having parents who are citizens of the particular state. Another area of development in Europe according to Fukuyama should be the naturalization of new citizens, as it is practiced in United States. Aside from the five years of continuous residency, new citizens are required to master basic English, study US history and government, and not have a criminal record. Additionally new US citizens are required to commit to basic principles and ideals of the constitution by swearing an oath of allegiance. (Fukuyama 2018a: 167-168)

More significantly, Fukuyama considers that European countries need to step away from basing national identity to ethnicity, and that the reason why United States have been more welcoming of immigrants in the past is in part due to its development of "creedal national identity". This consist of certain set of beliefs through which someone in the US can be accused of being un-American, and it does not entail any particular ethnic or religious identity, Fukuyama insists. Although, this claim has been contested after the election of Donald Trump, who built his campaign on the intensive criticism of immigration, especially from Mexico and the Muslim world. (2018a: 153-154, 157-158)

Fukuyama explains that when individual European countries started reforming their individual citizenship laws in the 2000s, certain countries established requirements so

demanding it did not seem to have inclusive intentions. Curiously, the German state of Baden-Württemberg even had the acceptance of gay marriage as a condition of citizenship, despite coming from conservative Catholic culture itself. The Netherlands uses a system of pillarization, which is based on parallel communities where secular, Protestant and Catholic communities for example, each have their own schools, newspapers and political parties. As Muslim immigration grew substantially, instead of integration with the majority population, the Dutch system channeled them to their own pillar, where Muslim children would go to the same school amongst themselves. (2018a: 150-151)

The least willing to accept culturally different immigrants in the EU were the Eastern European member states. According to Fukuyama, the Soviet rule and the imposition of communism after the 1945 hindered the region's social and political development. They did not have to address their nationalist pasts the way West Germany and Spain were forced to, neither did they commit to spreading liberal values in their citizens. Eastern European countries were among the least diverse in the developed world and once they abandoned communism and joined the EU, the attitudes toward positive liberal values of the EU were not warmly embraced by citizens who had no experience with immigration. Today, Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán states that the Hungarian national identity is based on Hungarian ethnicity. Much likewise Adolf Hitler had declared German identity on the basis of German blood, Fukuyama adds. (2018a: 151-152)

4.3 Post-multicultural skepticism and the rise of populism in Europe

Francis Fukuyama explains how the European left in past few decades supported a form of multiculturalism that downplayed the importance of integrating immigrants into the national culture and how "under the banner of antiracism it looked the other way from evidence that assimilation wasn't working" (2018a: 166). This gave way for the new populist right that was longing for a return to time with lesser diversity.

Sociologist Steven Vertovec discusses in his article *Towards post-multiculturalism? Changing communities, conditions and contexts of diversity* the multiple reasons and processes that have led multiculturalism under heavier criticism than ever before. Vertovec explains multiculturalism as a set of policies, which are more about helping immigrants maintain their traditions and identities, instead of pushing towards assimilation in the dominant population. Originally meant to build tolerance and respect for other cultures, these policies have arguably had detrimental effects to the societies, which have adopted them, as public discourse has heavily documented the "failure of integration" –rhetoric. Vertovec believes we have now entered an age of "post-multiculturalism". (Vertovec 2010: 86-90)

According to Vertovec, post-multiculturalist policies and discourse attempt to promote simultaneously a strong common identity as well as a recognition (and appreciation) of cultural differences. Governments in the post-multicultural era are trying to create a structure where strong group identities exist within a legal framework upholding the obligations of a citizenship. In the United Kingdom for instance, government now exercises policies that seek to reduce inequalities among ethnic minorities, support participation in civil society and common belonging in a cohesive society while advocating for an understanding for the range of cultures that contributing to the country's prosperity. Better integration of immigrants is pursued through such methods as providing classes for immigrants on British history, English language and holding ceremonies for new citizens amongst others. (Vertovec 2010: 91-92)

Rejection of globalization and immigration, Euroscepticism and Brexit can be seen as the product of European populism, argue Abdul Noury and Gerard Roland. Behind this political strategy or ideology is a form of exclusionary identity politics, which claims to protect the true people of a nation from European integration and foreign invasion. Another common narrative in populism is to separate the true people from "corrupt elite", who are willing to sacrifice the county's national sovereignty for foreign interests. Populism is not a

modern phenomenon, having existed presumably from the nineteenth century. Populist parties tend to focus on issues of identity on at least one of three areas: ethnic (regarding migration), regional (European), or national. Identity politics can be used not just to define national identity through ethnicity, but it can assert sub-national identities. (Nouly & Roland 2020: 3-4)

The emergence of populism and identity politics has been given different triggering factors by scholars. The vast effects of globalization and open trade, the rise of inequality and adverse income shock due to recession are economic causes. Cultural factors such as opposition to multiculturalism, and a backlash against cultural evolution of the past decades are also noticed as potential causes. Opposition to immigration has both an economic and a cultural dimension. Economic one, since domestic workers are afraid of the competition in the job market, and a cultural one because of the fear that if unable to adapt to local cultures, immigrants would create social tensions. Either way, several studies have shown that the 2015 migration crisis in Europe was one major factor that helped boost far-right parties' popularity. (Nouly & Roland 2020: 5, 10)

4.4 Diversity and social capital

Political scientist Robert D. Putnam (2007: 137) argues in his work "E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century", that while ethnic diversity has dramatically increased in modern societies, the level of social solidarity and social capital (shared norms, values and networks) has decreased. A similar narrative is often found in the discourse of populist nationalist who oppose immigration.

Putnam does not oppose immigration as such, and believes that ethnic diversity ("when balanced") is an important social asset that is desirable for all modern societies (2007: 138). But with evidence that is gathered particularly from United States, Putnam argues that in

the short run, ethnic diversity challenges social solidarity and inhibits social capital. Diversity, according to Putnam and his data, does not strictly speaking foster hostile race relations, but it seems to encourage withdrawal from collective life and increase social isolation (2007: 149-150).

Putnam brings forth a large selection of empirical studies that have supported the controversial "conflict theory" that implies that diversity "fosters in-group solidarity and out-group distrust" (2007: 142). But he is not trying to send some anti-immigrant message to the world. Putnam explains how sociologists have found how it is easier for people to trust one another when the social distance between them is smaller and when the social distance is greater, people then perceive each other in separate categories; that is not sharing a common identity (2007: 159).

This social distance depends on social identities. Identities that can be socially de-constructed and re-constructed, as Putnam explains. Dynamic societies will find a way how to achieve this change of social identity. Diversity itself is about socially constructed identities, says Putnam, and presents as an example the massive wave of immigrants that occurred in America a hundred years ago. This wave of immigration changed the predominantly WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant) society with introducing a far more ethnically diverse population. Generations later, the grandchildren of those WASPs and immigrants found a way to live on the same soil, despite initial social problems that Putnam imagines were likely. (Putnam 2007: 159-162)

The biggest challenge for these ethnically and socially heterogeneous nations then, at least in the eyes of scholars like Fukuyama and Putnam, is how to create a national identity that brings such diverse populations together. If nations are indeed imagined communities, how does one construct such stories that foster patriotism, a sense of togetherness and loyalty in every citizen in the nation, and not just one's own particular identity group inside that

nation? Also, how do the citizens themselves and the civil society take part in constructing such narratives?

This thesis will now attempt to discuss these questions in the context of three different nations, who all supposably share this need for an inclusive narrative of national identity, because of their uniquely diverse populations: Singapore, United States of America and South Africa. Their governments have mixed in multiculturalist policies with assimilationist ones in different amounts, with different ramifications.

5 SINGAPORE AND THE AUTHORITARIAN CIVIC IDENTITY

Because of its short history, in relative terms, Singapore can be considered an unusually modern nation for one that has managed to become one of Asia's most developed economies, with just over 5 million people, and no natural resources to exploit (Alam 2015). From the outside, today's Singapore may seem like a harmonious multiethnic society that does not suffer from racial tensions and social disrupt.

Singapore, like other countries with multiple ethnicities has had to create a civic sense of national identity through civic symbols so that it is not something that is inherited but rather culturally acquired (Ortmann 2009: 25). This chapter discusses Singapore's project of national identity and how they have governed such a diverse population and asserted the values in Singaporean nationhood so effectively.

Most of the articles referred to in this part come from Singaporean media channels. According to *BBC* (2020), there are two significant media outlets in Singapore: *Singapore Press Holdings*, which is said to have a somewhat of a monopoly of the press, and *MediaCorp*, which runs radio and television programmes. They also dominate the country's online media, and are claimed to hold back from publicizing controversially critical content, and to be generally friendly to the government. *Reporters Without Borders* have stated that self-censorship is widespread in Singapore's media. (BBC, 2020)

Regardless of these claims, it did not seem that race, ethnicity or government criticism was completely out of the conversation inside Singaporean mainstream news outlets, and the all-encompassing censorship claims may be slightly exaggerated. Still, many journalists echo the cosmopolitan values, which are part of "official" narrative of the nation.

5.1 Colourful history of a diverse people

Shaping national identity presents diverse options. Singapore, situated on an island on the Malay archipelago is an exceptionally thriving city-state born in the mid-1960s, that partly defines itself through its ethnic heterogeneity, says Anthony Kwame Appiah in his book on collective identities: "The Lies that Bind: Rethinking Identity" (Appiah 2018: 90-91).

With a colourful history of British colonialism, Japanese invasion, and later expulsion from the Federation of Malaysia; the turning point for the island's self-conception were the race riots in the summer of 1964, Appiah explains. Starting from the Chinese attacking Malays for celebrating the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, the large-scale violence that ensued shaped Singapore's domestic policies to the present day. (Appiah 2018: 91)

This event is recalled in an article on *The Straits Times* (published by Singapore Press Holdings), which embraces the progression Singapore has made from the days of division to the modern days of prosperity and peace, while still warning readers not to be "lulled into a false sense of safety" (Sim 2015). A conflict that started with Chinese bystanders and the Muslim Malays during the procession, escalated into nationwide violence that required 13 days of curfew. The event resulted in 23 bodies, with 454 people injured. It is claimed that the motive of the instigators was to provoke racial tensions. Only two months later, another riot breaks out between Malays and Chinese, resulting in another 13 bodies, with 106 people injured. (Sim 2015)

The 21st of July, when the first riots happened back in 1964, is in today's Singapore a Racial Harmony Day, where school kids are taught about the importance of respecting diversity. The constitution of Singapore states how the responsibility of the government was to always give aid to the racial and religious minorities of the nation, while recognizing the "special position" of the Malays, who are considered the indigenous people of Singapore. (Sim 2015)

In 1965, the founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, whose reign Fukuyama (2018a: 49) describes as a benevolent dictatorship, set out to build a multiracial nation, where all of the prominent ethnicities would be in an equal position. Singapore has since been implementing various multicultural policies and has remained committed to the colour-blindedness in its meritocratic system, as well as its successful economic growth policies (Sim 2015).

5.2 Rigid classification system

Two-fifths of the population speak Hokkien Chinese since many Singapore Chinese came from Fujian Province. Second large group are of Malay ancestry, who withhold diverse dialects and languages. Third group of Singaporeans consist from Indian ancestry, who mostly speak Tamil from the southern region. When Singapore received its independence, the ruling party responded to this complexity of ethnic and linguistic diversity by classifying its citizens into four "racial" groups: Chinese, Malay, Indian or Other (also known as the CMIO system). Because the government wanted to avoid tensions by choosing one language of one ethnic group as the official language, they decided to stick with the colonial language of English (as have many other countries formerly under British and French empires done, for same reasons), also hoping it would benefit the nation in global trade. Although the national anthem would be in Malay as a recognition of Malays as the indigenous people, English is the language all would learn in schools, and every citizen had to be bilingual, one's second language determined by one's ethnic origin. (Appiah 2018: 92-93)

Singapore's first leaders cherished the multiracial, multireligious and multicultural identity of the new nation, instead of trying to downplay the ethnic and linguistic diversity of its population. Still, English was the one common language everyone has to master, because much like Arthur M. Schlesinger (1992: 216) felt regarding Americans, so did the leaders

of Singapore feel that a common language was a fundemantal ingredient to ensure national cohesion, particularly in such a multiethnic society. These people knew the importance of creating normative significance to what it meant to be “Singaporean”, Appiah (2018: 93-94) argues. The country lacked any Volksgeist to help in romanticizing their history.

5.2.1 CMIO and the problem of essentializing

The CMIO system also determines the ethnolinguistic identity of every citizen in terms of their mother-tongue, so that every “race” has only mother-tongue. Children in the “I” for example, will learn Tamil even if their parents spoke Hindi. Singaporeans also religiously diverse, as the country is filled with Muslim mosques, Buddhist temples, Jewish synagogues, Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches along with Presybyterian, Anglican and Methodist schools. (Appiah 2018: 95-96)

The state saw that none of the racial groups in the CMIO would be segregated geographically, and made every large settlement consist of members from all official ethnicities. Moreover, the country’s “Sedition Act” criminalizes hostility and badmouthing between races and classes of Singapore, and it has put citizens in jail for criticizing religions other than their own. Any negative remarks about other groups on social media are reported to the police by fellow citizens. Such laws reflect the sensitivity, through which the country wants to avoid racial and religious tensions. This also restricts much of the criticism towards government. (Appiah 2018: 94-95, 97)

A case in point would be the young citizen who published a video on the social media platform *TikTok*, where he “sparked outrage” by listing reasons not to date Indian girls, as reported by a Singaporean news media *The Independent* (Stolarchuk 2020). On the video the young man describes Indian houses as “smelly” and Indian girls “very rude”, and it instantly went viral, in other words received much attention and several re-posts on other

websites, where other “netizens” described their amazement on the racist views of the young man, going as far as asking the Singapore Police Force to investigate the incident (Stolarchuk 2020).

This national project of Singapore with its respectful accommodation of diverse identity groups are what Charles Taylor called the “politics of recognition”, Appiah concludes. That model promises public acknowledgment from the state to various identities. Recognition is about respect, but it can also become about essentializing complex identities, Appiah insists. Essentializing in the sense than when the state gazes upon you with various identity profiles, educational stipulations and such; it fixes and rigidifies something that is not fixed or rigid, as identities are not. Appiah calls this the Medusa Syndrome; what the state looks at, solidifies into stone. In other words, when trying to give mere acknowledgment of someone’s existence, it tends to essentialize something that is constantly changing. Governing identities is an impossible task and the ordinary people will sooner or later ignore the boundaries. High levels of interracial marriages in Singapore suggest that new generations will grow unfit to the CMIO system. (Appiah 2018: 96-98)

5.2.2 Persisting discource of racial consciousness

The contradiction of the ethnic classification system and the nation’s devotion to colour-blindedness is highlighted even by the politicians, who are skeptical of the CMIO model’s sustainability. The hiding of race-based data is also suspicious and inappropriate for a modern liberal democracy.

An article found in *The Straits Times*, with the headline ”Parliament: WP's Sylvia Lim calls for open review of race-based policies”, touched the CMIO policy issue of Singapore. The chairman for the Worker’s Party Sylvia Lim brought the rigid ethnic classification of the CMIO model into critical light, implying that it has become outdated as modern citizens

with mixed ethnic backgrounds have created ambiguities into defining minorities. The system for example sets a proportion of flats in public housing that can only be owned by a particular ethnic group, which to Lim is problematic in Singapore's mission to become a race-blind society. (Kurohi, 2020)

The CMIO model and the organizations it informs are contributing to the country's racial consciousness, Lim says. They are said to safeguard minority rights, although the discussion should be about citizenship rights. Much to Appiah's point, Lim also referred to the inter-ethnic marriages, where both individuals are themselves of mixed parentage, as a prove of the CMIO classification system's incompetence. Additionally Lim criticises the four race-based self-help groups (such as Chinese Development Assistance Council or the Singapore Indian Development Association) that are informed by the CMIO model, as further establishing the racial consciousness, which Lim disapproves of. These organizations also have different sized resources available, which would be a sign of inequality. (Kurohi, 2020)

Lim also says that the government of Singapore collects a significant amount of data on race but chooses to publicize only selected results. Lim calls for transparency despite whatever reasons to withhold certain data, because it would help tackle the issues that affect particular communities. One particular hidden statistic is the percentage of each ethnic group within the nation's prison inmate population. As Lim proclaims, it is a normality everywhere else but Singapore. (Kurohi, 2020)

5.3 Pushback on authoritarian assertions

Stephan Ortmann explains that popular nationalism is not always the product of a ruling elite, which successfully promote nationalist beliefs. There are cases where those assertions of nationalism have been rejected by the population, and others where nationalism

developed before the elite began such discourse. According to Ortmann, a civic national identity is impossible to achieve, without the continuing negotiation between government and its people. Particularly in Singapore, there is evidence of the people's rejection of the "official" nationalism that the government promotes, which would include its supremacy of one party and the idea of Singapore's cosmopolitan nature. (Ortmann 2009: 26)

After 1980s, Singapore's government became more aware of the fact that economic growth and prosperity in itself was not sufficient to build for national identity, and began different campaigns to construct a more defined imagined community. According to Ortmann, these attempts have been failing, in part to the rulers' unwillingness to listen to popular notions of national identity, such as the use of Singlish as a national language (which it adamantly disapproves of). In 1965, after becoming independent from Malaysian Union, the government wanted to assert pragmatic values such as modernity, development and economic growth. Cultural considerations were left aside, as they were thought to be a hindrance for economic development, at the time. (Ortmann 2009: 27)

To ensure economic growth, the small city-state needed to integrate with global economy as fast as possible, and the government seeked to contact multinational corporations, instead of local businesses. Understanding the importance of motivating Singaporeans in their efforts to build a strong economy, the government began to spread the image of a harmonious community, working together towards prosperity. This was manifested through a massive housing scheme known as HDB, introduction of National Service, promotion of national symbols and annual National Day festivities, where buildings dressed in flags give a highly visual experience of patriotism, Ortmann argues. (2009: 26-27)

People's Action Party (PAP) is today known as the national party because of its control over all areas of politics, and it has used the national press to support this image of the symbiosis of the party and the state. According to Ortmann, dissenting articles in

newspapers may occur, but are always succeeded by government response. Self-censorship has been effectively established in Singaporean media. (2009: 28-29)

5.4 Survivalism as Singaporean ethos

Ortmann explains a fundamental narrative of how the government relied their support on an ideology of survivalism, or the crisis motive. That narrative is about a small city-state, with its scarcity of natural resources and an unideal geographical location (being a Chinese city in the middle of Malay states) in such a severe threat, that it needs a strong political leadership to survive. In the Prime Minister's National Day Rally speeches one often hears the notion that only the incorrupt and pragmatic rule of the PAP will Singapore be able to survive. It effectively enhances the dependence of the state, but simultaneously diminished any sense of national identity, because of the fact that there is a lack of emotional attachment to any cultural values. (Ortmann 2009: 29, 32)

Constructing a unique Singaporean identity was not of much interest at first, and most of the past has had to make way for the future. Old buildings and relics have been taken down, and any remnants of Singapore's colonial past have been replaced with skyscrapers, which symbolized the focus on a vision of future and progression. National symbols (such as the "mythical creature" Merlion) were invented, but they meant next to nothing to the average Singaporean. In Ortmann's view, this emphasis on change instead of creating strong historical narratives will not help in forming a strong Singaporean identity. (2009: 29-30)

A likely reason to mitigate past events is to not to be reminded of the ethnic tensions and incidents in Singapore's history. In an opinion piece in *South China Morning Post*, writer Balli Kaur Jaswal (2019) discusses government censorship on Singaporean artists, as the slightest of insensitivities could allegedly lead to race riots. The authorities (such as Ministry of Home Affairs) in Singapore will constantly warn citizens from addressing race in any way that may incite violence between ethnic groups (Jaswal 2019).

Singapore's leaders heavily supported meritocracy from the start, and a concept of multiracialism, since it did not want to favour any particular ethnicity over another because they needed their multiethnic trading partners to co-operate. With meritocracy, only the best would succeed and not those with ideal family relations, so corruption was effectively eliminated, making Singapore an attractive business partner for foreign businesses. Following the more prosperous times in the 1980s, the government then began to worry of the individualism and materialism brought upon by modernization, and formalized the "Shared values" as an attempt to institutionalize the traditional Asian values (of the group over individual and consensus over conflict), ingraining them into Singaporean national identity. From thereafter the government has been keen to promote the national identity, seeing that the "branding" of Singapore will prove useful in competition. (Ortmann 2009: 30-31)

5.5 People's understanding of Singaporean identity

Young people may find the pride in Singapore's economic growth and success much too shallow for a source for identity, and there are not many positive cultural traits that comes up in Ortmann's analysis of the vast amount of data in 2009. Instead, he argues that a Singaporean national character stems from negative experiences. This comes across as a popular differentiation between the "real Singaporeans" who have struggled through mandatory national service and difficult education system, and the "newcomers" who are citizens in the country merely on paper. (Ortmann 2009: 35)

CAN-IPS Survey on Ethnic Identity in Singapore published in 2017, concluded that ethnic pride through identifying with one's own ethnic language, traditions and festivals, is on the rise among Singaporeans aged 21-25. Cultural exchange and borrowing still does happen, and the particularly cuisine is an area of mutual sharing, according to respondents. One of the findings also indicated that the respondents associated national identity with the core

ethnic groups, since “true Singaporeans” could only be those who have Malay, Chinese, Indian or Eurasian backgrounds. (Mathews, Lim, Shanthini & Cheung 2017: 61-64)

The one positive tradition Singaporeans embrace in their discourse on national identity is the Creole language of Singlish. It mixes English with Chinese, Malay and Indian words, and it has been adopted by Singaporeans as one of their most visible and unique characteristics. To Ortmann (2009: 36), the new language could represent a new ethnic component to the mostly civic identity in Singapore. As mentioned before the government has been strictly against the popularizing of new language that could damage its position in global economy.

But there is certain proof a silent rebellion towards the government in this regard. An independent Singaporean media publisher called *The Smart Local* (Soh 2016), has an article on their website called “Why Singlish Is The Most Efficient Language In The World – TSL Comedy: Episode 28”, where it openly makes fun of the “gahmen” (government) imposing the Speak Good English movement, humorously turning it into Speak Good Singlish movement, while continuing to boast about the practicality of Singlish. It cannot be said that free word does not exist in the social media of today’s Singapore, even if government owned news outlets are a bit more calculated in their publishing.

The rigorous work-ethic, excessive materialism and rising individualism in Singaporean culture is considered a manifestation of *kiasuism*, which the citizens consider perhaps the most representational term of their national character, according to *Los Angeles Times* (Pierson 2019). Competitiveness, opportunism and ambition are the values of a person who is *kiasu*, along with the fear of losing. Obsessive queuing, and pressures to achieve the top grades are some of the manifestations of *kiasuism.* Ortmann (2009: 36) also recognizes the phenomenon as a popular invention to describe Singaporean nationalism, which is not controlled or asserted merely by the political elite.

5.5.1 Chee Soon Juan's alternative narrative

Despite the more open signals of dislike towards the expectations and assertions of the state, one could argue that Singapore has managed relatively well despite lacking a particularly strong, emotionally binding national identity. Or in other words, racial tensions and exclusive identity groups have not caused violence and disruption to Singaporean life, and the mixture of multiculturalist policies (celebration of different ethnic festivities, allowing and cherishing multiple religions) with certain assimilationist demands (same schooling system, mandatory English skills, National Service) has had arguably more positive effects on the construction of an inclusive multiracial national identity.

Mere material prosperity however, does not make Singaporeans the happiest country in the world, as Singaporean Simon Leow (2020) admits. As the World Happiness Report (WHR) implied, in 2020 Singapore were ranked 31st out of 153 countries, Singapore receiving highest ranks in terms of "healthy life expectancy", "perception of integrity in society" and of course, "GDP per Capita". Where Singapore lacked then, was on the measures of "freedom to make life's choices", "social support" and "generosity", which were the remaining factors for WHR. Falling behind with such qualities may indicate a weak civil society and poor social capital. (Leow 2020)

A man named Chee Soon Juan, the Secretary-General of a oppositional party called Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), and arguably one of the most quoted dissident in Singaporean news media, wrote an opinion piece published by *The Online Citizen* (Zannia 2017), where he expressed sadness towards the country's fixation with progress and modernization, which is affecting the country's collective memory. In the text, Chee recalls his past days in the school, where his son is now years later about to start his education, and observes the changed landscape. He reminiscents of the joyful leisure of playing on open spaces and lawns of the school yard, where now stands car parks and multi-storey buildings. "Every square foot of real estate was manicured, exquisitely engineered for

maximum capacity.", Chee writes, realizing that he does not recognize a single familiar landmark from his past (Zannia 2017). Chee looks at the present day campus the way he looks at his home country. Residential blocks that come closer together and are stacked higher and higher signify of over-crowdedness and the lack of space on the island in the face of a growing population. Leisure is nearly inexistent as it would hinder economic progress; only concrete and chronically stressed out Singaporeans occupy the space that once had greenery in it, Chee describes melancholically. There is no room for nostalgia, either.

More importantly, Chee understands that nothing about the newly reconstructed school brings him to his roots, since there is nothing to relate to. Such is the fate of many other monuments that Chee lists from theaters to libraries; all demolished to make way for shopping centres and expressways. "Need it to be said that an undeveloped sense of belonging erodes our national identity?" Chee asks (Zannia 2017). He is showing the importance of memories and historical monuments that give the powerful emotion of belonging to a place. The shared experience of ten years of school is a strong bind to the sense of story of national identity but it has been removed from reality by modernization. Chee would have Singapore to preserve its history, traditions and heritage, as have Japan and China, who likewise have aggressively modernized their nations.

> If we insist on hanging a price-tag on everything, as this country's officialdom is wont to do, then what value do we put on places that tell the story of where we came from or where we've been? What amount of money do we place on Singaporeans emigrating because they don't know what being Singaporean is anymore? What price do we figure for citizens living disengaged lives, tethered together only by the national creed that 'No one owes us a living' or its variant 'What's in it for me'? (Zannia 2017)

Many Singaporeans surely subscribe to these, arguably negative narratives, which Chee is presenting here. A strong national identity requires something to be proud of, and high GDP is not enough. Many Singaporean young people who are frustrated with the political system are emigrating from the country (Ortmann 2009: 33), and the state needs to come up

with something more profound than National Day celebrations to persuade them in staying on homeland.

5.6 Fear over foreign narratives

The Online Citizen (Hakeem 2018) reported how Bilahari Kausikan, the former Ambassador-at-large at the Ministry of Foreign affairs, stated on a forum in 2018 that the country is doing itself a disservice in not emphasizing history teaching in its school system. Kausikan believes that this opens up the possibility for foreign countries to influence Singapore's identity politics, through manipulating its sense of national identity. What Kausikan is worried of, is that the identity of Singapore, which (in his words) are based on ideas of multiculturalism and meritocracy, are under pressure from pro-China entities that attempt to assert Chinese identity to multiracial Singapore. The apparent motivation here being that Singapore would join China against United States in the political war, as Singapore's racial demographic is predominantly Chinese. Kausikan himself detests this view, calling it a distortion of a much more complex reality. (Hakeem 2018)

All in all, it is clear that the narratives of national identity in the case of Singapore vary and they come from multiple directions. Singapore is a country with 55 years of independent history, and it the most common story is the one repeated by the government; a small nation with a multiracial community, that has had to work hard for the survive in the global economy, and where corruption, racism and xenophobia have been banished to make way for this modernized multiracial success story. But the actual people of Singapore have found other ways to express their national identity, and sometimes use it as a tool to criticize the ruling elite of the PAP and the country's political system, all of which takes place particularly in the Internet.

There is also evidence, as explained by Ortmann (2009: 39-42) that in the light of declining levels in birthrate, government officials have started to attract foreign workers, which the locals consider unthoughtful towards Singaporeans, who would need those jobs. Fears of overcrowding and depressed wages have led to xenophobia and further frustration with the ruling elite, and its inabilty to listen to the concerns of its people.

6 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND POLARIZATION OF IDENTITIES

Tensions in the United States during the Trump-era have given a divided and fragmented picture of this a society, where different identity groups have become. Social media and biased partisan news outlets have undoubtedly driven polarization and tribalism to the point where even physical conflicts have a low threshold. Polarization and tribalism also contribute in governing such a diverse country very difficult. Several comments have been made on the dominance of identity-based politics in today's America. As discussed earlier, Robert Putnam (2008: 158) showed that evidently, many Americans are uncomfortable with diversity. The narrative for "melting-pot" assimilation has been the kind of nation building designed to fit only certain characteristics of the society, some argue for the benefit of white Americans.

At the same time, of a population of over 300 million people, statistic from the U.S. Census Bureau (Frey 2020) show that racially and ethnically diverse part of the population is increasing. In 2019, the white population had descended into 60,1 percent, whereas in the year 1980 that number was 80 percent. New estimates imply that almost 4 out of 10 Americans identify as other than white. The statistics also indicate that Latino and Hispanic youth population is rising, while the white youth population is decreasing. The black population has remained relatively constant for the last decades. (Frey 2020)

6.1 Current fixation on identity groups

Identity politics can be considered counterproductive for the existence of collective identity, and many see an issue in the lack of a sentiment for a wider concept of "us". Mark Lilla (2016) finds that democratic politics suffers from the awareness and celebration of differences, claiming that American liberalism has failed to bring people together for governing under the same nation. According to Lilla, there is a stubborn fixation of

diversity in education and press, which has given birth to a generation of citizens "narcissistically unaware of conditions outside their self-defined groups" (Lilla 2016).

Lilla argues that Americans are brought up from an early age to connect their idea of self into particular identity groups. Lilla makes an argument that the school history curriculums in United States echo the identity politics of today as a "distorted picture" of the major events and forces that affected American history is presented, giving an example of over-emphasizing women's right movement's role over those of the founding fathers in establishing a system of government through the guarantee of rights). As a consequence, Lilla finds that many Americans moving to colleges have significantly little to say on questions such as war, economy and common good, as they have spent disproportionately much time on identity discourse, believing that it would be the main question driving politics. (Lilla 2016)

Likewise, American journalism is now changed as the "lens of identity" distorts the focus of reporting and analyzing news. Lilla also sees the election of Donald Trump as the president as a result of the backlash of identity politics. The "whitelash" thesis suggests that Trump succeeded in portraying economic disadvantage as a racial question. According to Lilla, high numbers of Latino voters who supported Trump should clarify the political diversity inside ethnic groups that the liberals did not see. Lilla considers the possibility that the liberals' obsession on diversity made white, rural and religious Americans think of themselves as a disadvantaged group, whose identity was being ignored. (Lilla 2016)

Similar conclusions are provided by Francis Fukuyama who views the rise of the new nationalism in the United States deriving from the middle-class voters' sense of invisibility. Economic distress, according to Fukuyama (2108b: 94), is thus perceived as a loss of identity, and the dignity of certain citizens was violated due to focusing on favouring the poor and allegedly discriminated. Identity politics has become an essential concept in

defining modern global affairs, as the economic or ideological concerns have made way to the loudly discussed questions of identity (Fukuyama 2018b: 91-92).

Fukuyama compares the difference of the early civil rights movement and the later movements such as Black Panthers, the Nation of Islam and Black Lives Matter to point out the change in the agenda. Martin Luther King called for equal treatment of all members under one society, demanding African-Americans to be treated the same as majority citizens of the US. Whereas the latter groups have campaigned a concept of a separate identity, which demanded recognition and respect as a separate group outside the society's mainstream population. These groups promoted a narrative that black people grew up in a society hostile to them, and that white people could never reprehend that. Being black in itself should be something to take pride in, and one ought to neglect the racist mainstream society trying to conform others. Many black Americans assume the police brutality which has targeted black youngsters as part of a continuing tradition of systematic racism, which roots back to the historical trauma of slavery and lynching. (2018b: 97-98)

Fukuyama finds that a significant repercussion of the identity politics initiated by the political left wing has spread to the right, and in the case of United States and Donald Trump's rise to power, we have seen white nationalism come into mainstream. Fukuyama notes that the right has adopted the same rhetoric of victimization and accusation of the media and the establishment, which the left practices. Fukuyama expresses how: "Across the political spectrum, identity politics is the lens through which most social issues are now seen" (2018b: 104)

Fukuyama empathizes with the left's embrace of identity politics however. In many cases, the experiences of distinct identity groups need to be dealt in manners specific to those groups, and it has often been the inevitable response for injustice. Many policies and cultural norms movements such as Black Lives Matter and MeToo brought with them, were necessary changes that have genuinely helped people and the society. But Fukuyama

stresses that the emphasis on cultural issues, which identity politics tend to focus on, is taking the necessary attention and effort from the progressives to respond to the enlarging socioeconomic inequality that has been the status quo for three decades. Notably, many representatives for campaigners driven by identity politics have been the individuals closer to the top of the income distribution (female Hollywood stars in the case of MeToo campaign), which has not been helpful to address the income disparity between the top one percent and average tax payers. (2018b: 99-100)

Fukuyama argues that another side-effect of the left's identity politics has been its eroding influence to free speech, and the rational discourse required by liberal democracies, where all ideas and viewpoint are meant to be heard and evaluated, particularly in politics. Fukuyama depicts how civic discourse is eroded by the preoccupation with identity, as any assertion considered offensive to someone's inner self has can be used as grounds to silence or judge the person making such assertion. Fukuyama explains that:

> The focus on lived experience by identity groups prioritizes the emotional world of the inner self over the rational examination of issues in the outside world and privileges sincerely held opinions over a process of reasoned deliberation that may force one to abandon prior opinions. (2018b: 101)

The practice of identity politics have made democratic governing dysfunctional and chaotic, as seen in the extreme polarization in the political system of today's United States, and Fukuyama sees most of the blame to belong to the right. The Republican Party has more clearly situated itself to the far-right wing than the Democratic part to the opposite end, although both have steered away from the center. (2018b:101)

6.2 Political tribalism

Critics often point out that by connecting political views or ideologies into one's definition of self, political discussion becomes bigoted or emotionally charged when opposition to

one's political views are considered as attacks on his or her identity. Once people start considering a political allegiance as part of who they are, they start to root for them, as if it was a sports team they are supporting. These "supporters" are then expected to be loyal to the ideology, which provides fixed positions to complex questions in politics.

In *The Guardian*, Amy Chua (2018) recognizes the identity politics as a cause for political tribalism, where all identity groups feel threatened and offended, and no-one is calling for united America outside identity politics. She recalls the inclusive and group transcending rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement along with the influence of John Rawls, who asked people construct ideal society behind a "veil of ignorance" over what class, race or gender they would be born to. The left was once cosmopolitan, universalist defender of the oppressed but something changed by 1990s. Chua considers that as a reaction to Reaganism, and suspecting the ideal "colourblindedness" as a conservative tool for not addressing systematic racial injustices in America, new movement was beginning to form. (Chua, 2018)

One major distinction to present identity movements is the demand for recognition not "in spite of differences" but specifically because of the innate difference. Universality and conformity is considered misleading or repressive. "For today's Left, blindness to group identity is the ultimate sin, because it masks the reality of group hierarchies and oppression in America", Chua writes (2018).

Persisting racial inequality despite Obama's presidency has raised suspicion in the narratives of racial progression among young progressives, Chua argues. But the narrative over violent dominance of the white male Protestants who rule America has remained. Identity politics within the Left, have sought out to focus on the uglier aspects of American history and society. Chua finds that in many cases people defending the rhetoric of group blindness are now treated by the Left as potential racists who have not woken up to the realization of white supremacy in America. (Chua 2018)

6.3 The Hidden Tribes report

A research organization called *More in Common*, published a report late 2018 named "Hidden Tribes: A Study of America's Polarized Landscape", where eight thousand randomly chosen Americans were asked about their moral values, ideas on parenting, personal responsibility and approaches to group identity. With these core values the researchers then divided the subjects into seven "tribes", which they used in predicting their views on various political issues.

The aim of this report was to find areas where Americans agree with, and identify the most effective interventions applicable in countering division and renewing American national identity, the report states. Themes for which respondents in the research share their thoughts ranged from immigration and American identity, race and social justice, gender and sexuality as well as religion and extremism. (Hawkins, Yudkin, Juan-Torres & Dixon 2018: 19, 21)

One of the significant findings of the report was that a large amount of the subjects (two-thirds) felt uncomfortable with ideological conformity and feel unrepresented in today's polarized politics. This group the researchers named the Exhausted Majority. This Exhausted Majority are against the ideological purity of American politics and would support making compromises in politics as in all areas of life, but their absence from media gives more space for the opposing wings of the spectrum to dominate public debate. What the report is continuously trying to prove, is that it is somewhat of a misperception of what constitutes most of the Americans, to see two polar opposites going for each other's throats, and that there is a larger amount of people in the middle who are being left to the sidelines. (Hawkins et al. 2018:116)

The study also claims that the dynamics of social media have played a factor in building partisanship and tribalism within the most engaged population. Echo chambers of social

media restrict exposure to alternative views and work in favour of the loudest and most extreme voices. This has aided in enforcing similar ideas and habits within the most engaged wing groups, while discouraging others from participating at all. Functional communication at the national level as well as personal level requires an atmosphere of trust and objectivity, as More in Common researchers conclude. Tribalism destroys that atmosphere, replacing it with competing loyalties. (Hawkins et al. 2018: 134)

More in Common describes polarization and tribalism as the result of complex economic and social forces with enduring historical injustices, but as a remedy the researchers believe United States should start renewing their sense of national identity, which could unify its citizens and overcome polarization (Hawkins et al. 2018: 138). It is clear by now, that many are rooting for this kind of inclusive nationalism to rescue United States from its cultural division, but those narratives for such positive national identity seem scarce at the moment, at least in public discourse.

6.4 The white American dream

The magazine *Wired* explains in an article how "#BLACKLIVESMATTER" became a banner for dozens of organizations and millions of individuals to press for change and direct media attention to something that despite being ever-present, was not being addressed firmly enough: police brutality against African-Americans (Stephen 2015).

The American-based social movement Black Lives Matter (BLM) has harnessed the modern tools of communication and social media more effectively than any other protest movement in the history of the United States, the magazine's writer Bijan Stephen says. He also believes that the movement has transformed the deep-rooted experience of being black in America. BLM has created a habit for citizens to record their interactions with the police on video, publishing them immediately to highlight black vulnerability. Stephen also

credits the rise of new black public intelligentsia, along with the emergence of new political language. More importantly, Stephen sees the change in his own experiences. (Stephen 2015)

Stephen (2015) feels that BLM has given the language to understand his own experiences of prejudice, as well as solutions to change society by spreading the awareness of what the violence experienced by blacks look like, as the days of racism in America are not in the distant past but continue to exist. Stephen believes there's a "stale, conventional" wisdom present in American discourse that implies overt racism as a thing of the past in the country. Stephen half-jokingly advises such speakers to spend a little time in Twitter, or YouTube comment sections to realize that is not the case (Stephen 2015).

The killing of George Floyd in May of 2020 was a new breaking point, enforcing the idea that United States law enforcement is not about protecting and saving of all lives in American society, as the official websites of the movement (Black Lives Matter 2020) express. BLM calls for the end to systemic racism, saying it allows the "culture of corruption" to remain untouched and "our lives" (meaning black Americans) being taken. The means to achieve this is to defund the police on a national level, BLM says. The movement also compares the ongoing virus COVID-19 with White Supremacy, which both are "killing us every single day". (Black Lives Matter 2020)

In the state of California, Floyd's murder was seen as lynching, says an article by *Los Angeles Times* (Beason 2020). White families are said to use the incident to showcase their children of the kind of violence they do not need to fear as white Americans. Having believed that the election of the country's first black president Barack Obama at the time would have changed the mistreatment of blacks, a local woman expresses amazement in her naivity. (Beason 2015)

Furthermore, the article claims there is a disagreement between white and black Americans on whether the phenomenon of police violence in the United States represents a national crisis, referring to a poll where mere 39 percent of white respondent believe it does, compared to the 80 percent of black respondents. The article also mentions the toppling and removal of statues and monuments of Confederate soldiers and slaveholders (including the country's founding fathers) represent a turning point in history, implying that the white majority is coming more in terms with the reality with the country's racist system. (Beason 2015)

6.4.1 A nation founded on oppression

In 2019, to commemorate the 400th anniversary of American slavery (first slave ship landed to the country August 20th, 1619), *New York Times* began the "1619 Project", a series of reported essays and other writings that inspect the role of slavery and racial discrimination in every aspect of American life, from health care to public transportation (WNYC News 2019). According to the magazine itself, this project's goal is to "…reframe the country's history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative." (New York Times 2019).

An ongoing project still in 2020, the original issue conceptualized by Nikole Hannah-Jones, consisted of 10 essays about slavery's legacy in the United States, most of them written by black writers, with an addition of poems and short stories. The 1619 Project was a sensation from the start, says *The Washington Post* (Ellison 2020). The project, which in many ways was meant to fill the gaps in US education that had overlooked the role of race and slavery in American history, received a lot of attention by journalists and academics, some of which did not agree with certain notions in the texts.

Historians argued against the essays' descriptions of Abraham Lincoln's hesitance towards emancipation, and a passage in Hannah-Jones's text, which implied that the Revolutionary War was launched by colonists because they would have wanted to preserve slavery. Other writers in the same magazine also attributed to the projects errors to derive from a "monocausality" that sees everything through the lens of slavery. Individual passages in the text have later been edited due to the amount pressure from Civil War historians and scholars. (Ellison 2020)

Slightly later, as the protests for racial justice ramped up, the 1619 Project renewed its interest and politicians became involved in the debate. In particular, was the sitting president Donald Trump, who took the subject under heavy criticism during the White House Conference on American history, transforming the controversy of the publication into an anecdote for his election campaign rally (Ellison 2020).

6.5 Donald Trump's American story

In his speech during the conference, Trump tried to repeat the narrative, which has romanticized the American experience for generations, calling it the land where "anything is possible", praising the American Constitution as a "…product of centuries of tradition, wisdom, and experience.", before ultimately turning to attack the "left-wing mobs", for spreading narratives of the nation that he considers to desecrate it (The White House 2020). Notably, Trump is openly talking about the writers such as those partaking in the 1619 Project, as "far-left", contributing to the classification of American citizens into these two tribes.

Trump speaks of the threat of a left-wing cultural revolution, which he sees to be a propagandist movement with the reversing and distorting the American story on its agenda. The protesting that filled the streets after the killing of George Floyd he also attributes as

“left-wing rioting and mayhem “that is part of the “left-wing indoctrination” in American schools. During the speech Trump takes on the “totally discredited 1619 Project”, which he again, describes as sour influence to the children because of the way it portrayes history. Trump says:

> Nothing could be further from the truth. America’s founding set in motion the unstoppable chain of events that abolished slavery, secured civil rights, defeated communism and fascism, and built the most fair, equal, and prosperous nation in human history. (Applause.) The narratives about America being pushed by the far-left and being chanted in the streets bear a striking resemblance to the anti-American propaganda of our adversaries — because both groups want to see America weakened, derided, and totally diminished. (The White House 2020)

Visible in this part of the speech, are Trumps view of both of the dominant narratives in United States right now. First is the narrative Trump wants to believe and foster; the nation’s ability to renounce slavery, the gradual forming of equal rights, the victory over “evil” ideologies and the status of the United States as a global superpower with its (alleged) equal and fair political system. This is the rather simplistic narrative that highlights everything that has ever been considered a success in American history, without reflecting on any of the controversial aspects of it. Evidently, narratives are often asserted in their most narrow and uncritical form, when they are produced by the political elite.

Second, is the narrative that acknowledges historical oppression and its effect on modern culture, while trying to emphasize the dark parts of the kind of nation building that includes all of the four paths in Fukuyama’s (2018: 140-143) theory: settling to new territory and the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous people, creation of borders and acquiring independence, assimilating its people to fit into the culture of the existing dominant group (such as language), and finally reshaping the national identity to fit particular characteristics of the society, which in the past seem to have stem from certain values reflected in its Constitution; such as individual freedom and equal opportunity.

The language of identity is on the surface in Trump's speech as well: "The only path to national unity is through our shared identity as Americans. That is why it is so urgent that we finally restore patriotic education to our schools." (The White House 2020). The notion of national unity comes off as somewhat trivialized and vague after such relentless antagonizing of the political left, which arguably comprises a large part of the population. Patriotic education is of course another narrative of history that is less concerned with actual facts than it is with the impact it wants to instill to the pupils: patriotism.

7 SOUTH AFRICA AND THE WEAKNESS OF THE STATE

South Africa is a nation with a population of approximately 55 million, with 11 official languages although English is considered the lingua franca in the nation's public life, government and communication, while also being spread by the media (Alexander 2018). With diverse cultures, religions and origins living under the "rainbow nation", the people are often divided in media through racial terms: mainly black, white and mixed-race, or coloured communities. Polls, which will be presented here, indicate a lack of trust for the government that is run by a party on a mission for racial equality, but with a heavy stigma of incompetence and corruption. With a history of colonialism and a relatively recent history of racial segregation, along with a myriad of present societal problems, South Africa is arguably one of the most difficult nations for exercising believable, positive nation building today.

7.1 Tensions and crime in post-apartheid South Africa

An article in the news outlet *Al Jazeera* reported how an incident in South Africa instigated claims of "ethnic cleansing" (Al Jazeera 2020). South African "whites" as the white-coloured population are referred to, is a minority group in the country's 58 million people, constituting less than 9 percent of the population, but owning approximately 70 percent of the private farmland in South Africa. Killings of white farmers by "black suspects" were narrated by certain white minority activist groups as evidence of racially motivated hate crimes, or "white genocide", the report says. (Al Jazeera 2020)

President of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, was quick to deny such allegations and considered the actions as plain criminality, which should not be treated as genocidal ethnic cleansing, as such claims are only made by lobby groups who wish to distort the reality. This statement was made after a group of white farmers stormed the courtroom where the

suspects were receiving justice, attempting to attack them. According to Ramaphosa this proved ”just how easily the tinderbox of race hatred can be ignited”. (Al Jazeera 2020)

News such as these are unfortunate for a country that has a polarizing and violent recent history, and struggles to bring unity under a nation. This is what Fukuyama and others may have meant, when he says how countries lacking a strong sense of national identity are bound to face political turmoil, as ethnic or ”racial” identity groups have stronger ties to people. But it could be said that the apartheid regime, which only ended in the 1990s, is so recent that a more positive, virtuous and prosperous national narrative has not been built as of yet.

7.2 National institutions as part of African nationalism

The ruling party of post-apartheid South Africa has been the African National Congress (ANC) and it has won the elections since the presidency of Nelson Mandela in 1994. It has lately seen a significant drop in its votes across the country. To Johannesburg-based researcher Ivor Chipkin, it seems evident from ANC’s electoral performance that it shifting towards a party that represents a people of particular region and ethnicity. As their popularity has seen a generic and stable decrease in all other (ethnically diverse) regions since 2004, the region of KwaZulu-Natal has proved to be its most adamant supporter. With such a strong Zulu base, to which the party has become dependent of, and Chipkin considers this to be concerning to the future of African nationalism. (Chipkin 2016: 217, 220-221).

ANC was famous for their commitment to non-racialism, support of cosmopolitanism, and bringing awareness of the South African people symbolically through its statements and materially in its membership. Notably, there are no major political movement that would have separate or break down the nation. (Chipkin 2016: 221-222)

Chipkin brings up a point of how important the presence of certain institutions that touch the citizens' daily lives can be, in regards to nation-building. To Chipkin it is a largely overlooked perspective because of the over emphasis on matters of identification, which stems from the ”cultural turn” of nationalism studies in the 1980s. What ANC initially tried to change in South Africa, was that the political economy of institutions would function so that they would serve the common people over white domination, Chipkin says. National instututions were built to serve all people, and thus the ”people” was established institutionally, as South Africans were to develop a share experience of the state and state departments, such as gathering together to vote. (Chipkin 2016: 222-223)

However, ANC as a government has had difficulties in making the institutions function despite managing to extend most services to more people of different colour and in between regions following the unequal system of the apartheid state in the past. Government functions have still performed poorly on areas of health and education, therefore Chipkin sees that African nationalism has suffered significantly from inadequate results of South Africa's institution building and state formation. This has led to government departments having now outsourced much of the work to private companies, and particular urban areas have now popularized private hospitals for instance. This phenomenon is a sign of de-nationalisation, Chipkin argues, as citizens of South Africa in all classes are disengaging from state institutions. (2016: 224-226)

The valuable point here is, that the weak performance by the government to build all-inclusive, functional institutions has also led the society to further divide into autonomous communities where alternative schooling systems, healthcare, policing or infrastructure exists. This fundamentally does not foster a shared experience of citizenship that could bring South African people together as an ”imagined community”. Institutions, as Chipkin puts it, are the basic conditions that give birth to a shared identity (2016: 226).

7.3 Ethnic grievances from corruption

In ethnically diverse societies worldwide, corruption is a strategic tool used by identity groups to dominate or resist domination, as researcher Camilla Orjuela (2014: 765) observes in her article ”Corruption and identity politics in divided societies*”*. Orjuela explains that individual and collective corruption usually come together as the benefits are being directed to social or ethnic groups, networks and organizations that one is related to. In Nigeria, it is expected from people of power to help their kin (ethnic or linguistic group), not doing so is frowned upon (2014:757). In Sri Lanka ethnicity is the collective identity that stands above all other group interests, as the majority Sinhalese construct the elite who benefits from resources legally (and illegally) over minority groups like Tamils (2014: 758).

Orjuela writes that corruption is both a cause and consequence of inequality, which leads to grievances over being marginalised and repressed. Identity-based conflicts stem from these grievances. When the society suffers from inequality and corruption it encourages trust on one’s own identity group, when people start having faith only on their own group members, as the corrupt ”others” are no longer trustworthy. Moreover, it is not always the sheer factuality of inequality but the public perception of it, which creates ethnic grievances. In Kenya, there is a pattern of marginalisation regarding particular regions with certain ethnic groups, which manifests in the regulation of accessibility to water and electricity. But according to Orjuela, it is not just the corruption itself that people find injust, but rather that the elite exercising it, is another ethnic group than that of their own. (Orjuela 2014: 759)

Ethnic grievances bred by corruption are visible in the violent events after Kenya’s elections in 2007, when over a thousand were killed and hundreds of thousands displaced after ethnic groups who thought it was their time to rule insisted that the election results were fixed. In Nigeria the Igbos lost a battle for separation in the late 1960s and still hold

grudge towards government of ethnic ”others”. Almost a million bodies were left after the incident. Orjuela argues that in contrast to most Nigerians who consider blatant corruption as the fundamental problem, Igbos see the corruption embedded with ethnically based marginalization. In Sri Lanka too, studies indicate that paying bribes to local authorities is commonplace and the minority ethnic groups called Tamils insist their bribes need to be higher than those of the Sinhalese majority. A point Orjuela makes in her article, is that constructivist understanding of identity makes the distinction of societies divided along class or ethnic lines ambiguous, and since the dynamics behind corruption are being interpreted in ethnic terms, it might disguise the fact that class-based inequalities are maintained through corrupt practices. (Orjuela 2014:760)

Because corruption has become a political slogan and an area which needs to be tackled through policy action, it is also a way to separate the self from the ”corrupt other”. In the spirit of identity politics, corruption is strategically politicised into ”anti-corruption” discourse in order to discredit and bash opponents. When Nigeria’s president Obasanjo created commissions to tackle corrupt practices in the year 2000, few actual convictions were made after substantial evidence against government politicians, Orjuela writes. Nigerians generally believed that the ones who received prosecution had merely fallen from the president’s grace and that the majority of government officials are all guilty of corrupt actions. The anti-corruption campaign was only part of a political power play where accusations were meant to make the ruling government look righteous. (Orjuela 2014: 757, 762)

Such politics of anti-corruption can take on divisive dimension also regarding to ethnicity, Orjuela observes. This was the case when in Sri Lanka allegations of Muslim favouritism rose after a disproportionate amount of Muslim students were admitted to a prestigious law college in 2012. At the time Muslims were criticized and physically attacked by Sinhalese nationalist groups. A very similar incident occurred in regard to the Sinhalese students leaking exam questions but this was not (strategically) framed in ethnic terms. Accusations

of corruption are used to mobilise opposition and motivate violence, Orjuela concludes. In Sri Lanka, organizations such as Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam refer to themselves as a movement that would liberate the corrupt Sri Lankan state. War and ethnic clashes have also proved useful for ruling elites to remain in power as politics of fear and hatred have been spread to distract the focus from ongoing corrupt practices. Corruption is thus used in identity politics to make one's own ethnic group seem more virtuous than the other. (Orjuela 2014: 762-763)

Corruption has made several headlines in South Africa too, from accusations of government leaders taking bribes to private individuals or companies taking control of state organs to see public funds move to their own possession; a process South Africans know as "state capture", writes *The Guardian* (Gevisser 2019). Pew Research Center (Wike, Simmons, Vice & Bishop 2016) showed that in 2016, most South Africans believe that the government is operating to improve the well-being of only a few groups of people in the society.

7.4 Perceptions on a biased government

69 percent of the South African blacks are more optimistic about the nation's future economic prosperity, whereas only 46 percent of the whites and 30 percent of the mixed-race respondents agree to that perception. Similarly, 82 percent of black South African would encourage a young person to stay in South Africa if he or she wants to have good life, whereas only 54 percent of whites and 61 percent of mixed-race respondents would do the same. These results reflect on the racial dynamics of the country, as of those who identify with the nation's ruling party ANC, 96 percent are black. Competing party, Democratic Alliance has a more racially diverse support in people who identify with it, as 34 percent are whites, 24 percent blacks, and 35 percent mixed-race people. (Wike et al. 2016)

On the subject of corruption, only 28 percent of the respondents in the survey would say that the government is run for the benefit of all South Africans, therefore it can be argued that ANC has somewhat failed in its efforts to represent the entire nation's diverse population, or to at least give such perception (Wike et al. 2016). As of now, South Africa is not in a situation where parties are explicitly based in one ethnicity or race, as the case may be in other major African countries, but to some there is fear of things developing towards that direction.

According to *Africanews* (Mumbere 2018), even the former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki has accused ANC of becoming a "black party" that has forgotten its multiracial policies. These comments were made through a pamphlet and it came in the light of ANC's controversial land redistribution policy, which would allow the expropriation of land without compensation and then redistribute it to black people as a means to fight back the persisting inequality and ethnic grievances. Ramaphosa, the current ANC leader, has stated that 72 percent of private farms are owned by white South Africans. (Mumbere, 2018)

An image of corrupted, racially divided and problematic South Africa is painted by foreign media as well. *BBC* (2018) describes South Africa as a place where violence of racial discrimination and the grievances it created are "part of the nation's DNA". Furthermore, another interviewee, a citizen who witnessed a white mob beat the life out of his friend, insisted that such a thing as a rainbow nation does not exist since whites still have more powers to this day. (BBC 2018)

7.5 Significance of sports

In 2019, the South African national rugby team, the Springboks, won the third world cup in the nation's history. What was symbolically significant about this time, was that the team's

captain Siya Kolisi was a black South African, among a mixed race team, as *Business Line* reports. A famous instance that reflected the statesmanship of Nelson Mandela took place in 1995, when South Africa hosted the Rugby World Cup. At the time the newly born democracy was severely fragmented along racial and ethnic lines, one of the cleavages being sports. Rugby was a game primarily played by Afrikaners, the descendants of Dutch, German and French settlers, whereas black South Africans played football. (Madhavan 2019)

Followers of Mandela who fought against the apartheid system did not care much for the Springboks, which they felt was a reminder of the white dominance of the past. Some even participated in the crowds to root for the other team, playing opposite South Africa. Mandela refused the efforts to get rid of the Springboks, as he felt a team supported by Afrikaners would foster insecurity, as many white South Africans were planning to leave the country at the time. Mandela openly gave his support to the Springboks, attempting to build support for them in the nation's black community, even if the African National Congress did not agree with it. The team went on to win that year, giving South Africans and Mandela reasons for pride. The sport's popularity among the blacks grew consequently. The 1995 team had but one black player, much in contrast to today's version. (Madhavan 2019)

Sports have a major influence on national self-consciousness. The ”rainbow nation” – narrative was introduced once more by then president Jacob Zuma during the FIFA World Cup, hosted by South Africa in 2010. According to *People's World*, Zuma was quoted saying: ”We now proudly say that we are one nation united in its diversity, with a Constitution which declares that South Africa belongs to all who live in it.”, during the opening week of the international football tournament (Lozano 2010). With this type of discourse the South African state clearly wanted to continue to reshape the national identity through sports, as it had successfully done in the past.

The South African national team in football was suspended from FIFA membership in 1961 because of the nation's segregation policies and later completely expelled after the events of the Soweto uprisings, when several hundreds of young blacks were killed by the police during nationwide protests against the apartheid regime. In 1992, the team was let back in. Today's team has been nicknamed *Bafana Bafana*, which means "the boys" in Zulu. The South African World Cup was meant to cherish the country's rich culture and a symbol of progression from its past oppression. This, despite the fact that the country was suffering from rampant poverty (unemployment around 27 percent) and disease (HIV, tuberculosis and malnutrition causing problems for millions of citizens), which are issues that football cannot fix. (Lozano 2010)

8 CONCLUSIONS

Before concluding the thesis, a short comparison of the three nations takes place here, as well as discussing the general findings of the substance of the different narratives and the differetn forms of nation building that support them.

8.1. Summary

Singapore, United States of America and South Africa represent three countries with unique histories and stories that contribute to their national identity and nationhood. Having acquired independence, the governments in all three understood the importance of fostering a national identity that would emotionally bind citizens with different backgrounds to do well for a common cause. The narratives that have been promoted by the governments have received mixed reactions.

South Africa is arguably the most diverse of the three, with such a vast linguistic and ethnic demography. Being a developing country, South Africa also battles with the problems of poverty and crime on a level that Singapore and United States do not. Trust in the government is relevant as it builds citizens' loyalty towards the state and vice versa, if the state is believed to be legitimate, it makes the government more stable. We see now that the image of the ruling party of South Africa is becoming that of a ”black party”, which will foster a racial element to the national identity of South Africa.

Cultural creations such as sports teams with mixed races and ethnicities might help strengthen the narrative of the ”rainbow nation” to some extent, but the state needs to start acting accordingly and find ways other than just ”expropriation without compensation” to build equality and unity to the country. The racially motivated violent breakouts are said to be product of the apartheid-legacy by South African leaders, but the ethnic grievances have

remained also because of the inability of the state to change the status quo of inequality. Poorly constructed institutions is a non-cultural element that affects cultural disunity of South Africa. The shared experience of citizenship is very small in a nation, where individual communities will rely their own to survive, speaking in their own languages. Furthermore, at this point there seems to be very scarce stories in the history of South Africa, which would be proudly highlighted, other than that of Nelson Mandela.

It should be acknowledged that whereas South Africa and United States have traumatizing memories of racial segregation, Singapore does not, and the violence and disruption that took place in the race riots has been made an example in public discourse of the slippery slope of racial prejudice, which should be avoided at all cost. It is clear that historically speaking, much of the national identity of Singapore has more or less developed in authoritarian conditions, as the state has asserted ideas such as cosmopolitanism and democracy with the supremacy of one party, without much dialogue or feedback from the people. Moreover, the rigid censorship and hypersensitive media control over tabu subjects have had an effect where the occasional social media rant becomes exaggeratingly reprehensible in the public eye. The question is, would racial harmony and social balance continue, if Singapore would liberalize its culture and pull back the watchful eye of the government?

The dissident voices of parliament members and oppositional politicians, as well as social media discourse have shown that the government is a target of criticism, and the narratives it has presented are becoming outdated. CMIO model suggests that the nation is inherently constructed of Chinese, Malays and Indians (all of which have been asserted with a single second language) and Others, but it seems as if the future Singaporeans will fall increasingly into the category of “Others”, since people mix and create new identities. The nation’s interesting mixture of celebrating difference and national unity at the same time seems benevolent, but the lack of history and tradition and the overt focus on modernity

and economic growth are alienating many of the people, who are perhaps discovering more depth to their lives in the identities of their ethnic groups.

One of the more important findings here is how important the role of history and curricula is as a form of nation building, as the public education system is used to teach the children about the nation's past. As many theorists have insisted, it is alongside citizenship rules and immigration laws, one of the most crucial policies. If Singapore indeed neglects the preservation of its history for the betterment of its economic potential, as seems evident from Chee Soon Juan's writing, they are further disengaging their population from any sense of connection and pride towards their nationality. Without nationhood, there will be no substance to the idea of "Singaporean". Singapore will continue to be an ideal place for living, as long as there is prosperity to enjoy from. If that was taken away, the levels of emigration would arguably increase. The lack of a sense of national identity creates a lack of loyalty to one's nation. It would be interesting to ask how willing would Singaporeans be to go to war for their country, in case of an armed conflict abroad.

Curricular content causes a lot of heated discussion in the United States as well, as even its president has become an adamant supporter of "patriotic education". As the nation keeps growing increasingly diverse racially and ethnically, it needs to concider the alternative narratives that tell a different story of the American experience more openly. Naturally, when speaking of nations as social constructs, it should always be examined who is doing the constructing. Unlike Singapore and South Africa, where the nation building process has been more predominantly a top-down exercise of the elite, in the United States it seems, the civil society has taken a stronger role in creating national identity. The critical view of the history of the United States as a nation built with oppression that reflects in the entire society has legitimacy and shoul be taken seriously, but it may not comprehend the entire being of United States' history and culture. Narratives that are too narrow in their scope may paint the reality too subjectively.

Similarly, the “melting pot” assimilationist narrative is proving to be a narrow one, since it does not celebrate diversity, but expects diverse peoples to turn into the type of Americans, characteristics of which most resemble the dominant population. The United States, arguably is not as multicultural as Singapore (and not nearly as multicultural as South Africa), and it is questionable whether Fukuyama’s view of a “creedal national identity” is as uniting as he claims. However, Fukuyama’s suggestion of the causality between successful democracies and strong national identities seems mostly legitimate. Singapore perhaps cannot yet be called as a truly liberal democracy, but it seems to be moving into that direction and the dissident voices (as long as they do not cross certain limits) have not been completely shut down. Most of United States have managed to stay united despite its massive population for now, even if the country’s national identity is in need of a reconstruction. South Africa proves to be the most difficult place for anyone to build the kind of authority for national narrative that Nelson Mandela had. The future will show whether independent communities will rise from today’s South Africa and move borders to suit existing ethnolinguistic areas, or if the nation finds a stronger narrative to stay together.

8.2. Final conclusions

This thesis is attempted to shed light on the importance of narratives, those that are asserted on us from above, as well the ones we create in our culture. Different theories to identity and nationalism helps to understand the phenomenon of identity politics and populist nationalism, as well as the processes and approaches to nation building that can be practiced through coercion and exclusion. Nationalism connects culture in a fascinating way and binds us emotionally to a community whose reality we might only know a fraction of. Reconstructing national identites to fit the existing realities of the society is the approach that continues to be manifested in the alternative narratives that arrive from the civil society: These identities are not always simply positive or virtuous stories of the nation, but can be more honest and credible, which give them more legitimacy.

This thesis could have benefited from a larger empirical material to support the statements made by other researchers and pundits. The examples from media discourse are there to show the possible contrast in the foreign and domestic journalism on the subject national identities, and the individual statements by politicians and citizens offer more insight to sense of nationhood in both bottom and top. This thesis would have benefitted from polls, barometers and research material more focused on racial differences, as not all countries gather data based on race. Another valuable point of view would be to look at the change in narratives or the change in people's perception of national identity over longer period of time, for example decades, to see signs of shifting attitudes towards one direction or another.

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