

ENJOYING AN EMPTY EDIFICE: NATIONALISM THROUGH THE LENSES OF LACANIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS

Nebojša Blanuša 

Faculty of Political Science
University of Zagreb
E-mail: nebojsa.blanusa@fpzg.hr

Vedran Jerbić 

Independent Researcher
E-mail: jerbicv@gmail.com

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Abstract This paper reaffirms the methodological potentials of Lacanian psychoanalysis for the theories of nationalism. From the Lacanian perspective, national consciousness and self-determination are only possible in the fantasmatic framework through the (mis)recognition and retroactive construction. National imagination is the form of transference, necessary for performing the nation through invented traditions and rituals. However, beyond symbolization and imaginary (mis)recognition, there is always something that resists closure, linked with the subjects' desire and organized around the lack of the subjects' full enjoyment. Taking together all these aspects, we build an analytical framework for the study of nationalism, which comprises a quadruple system of identifications by referring to the concepts of Ideal-Ego, Ego-Ideal, Super-Ego and specular Other, and illustrate it through the example of the AKP's Turkish nationalism.

Keywords subject (of nation), Name-of-the-Nation, enjoyment, identification, Ideal-Ego, Ego-Ideal, Super-Ego, specular Other

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the psychoanalytic methodological framework of theories of nationalism from the perspective of Lacanian theory. We want to explore and systematize methodological contributions of Lacan's teaching in a form that will allow for more empirically oriented research of national ideologies. We build on the thesis that a constitutive impossibility, which permeates all collective subjectivities, as delineated in the Lacanian *ontology of lack* (Austin, 2016), has important consequences on the epistemological and methodological limitations of the theory of nationalism. Nonetheless, it offers a distinctive type of

reading which can be used to generate many "small narratives", explaining the cases of the emergence of nationalism.

Our contention is that by approaching the problem of nationalism from the Lacanian perspective we are not only renouncing the possibility of any final conceptual clarification, but are considering such *lack* as the reflection of the constitutive impossibility of the final closure and totality of the politico-social community. In other words, Lacan's teaching confronts us, as Stavrakakis (1999) points out, not just with the issues of "subjective identification" (that is, collective identification in our case¹) but with the problem of the "constitution of reality itself". We shall emphasize negativity that permeates the national edifice, not in relation to some 'empirical' reality that disaffirms it, but in relation to various attempts to comprehend that very "reality" as coherent and consistent. What is at stake in the analysis of national ideology or identity from a standpoint of Lacan's teaching is a way in which a certain historically and political specific juxtaposition of symbolical resources and organization of collective enjoyment temporary sustains the "social reality" of a nation.

The existing literature on the psychoanalytic approach in the field of nationalism studies consist of several common trajectories pointing to the intersubjective and ambiguous character of collective identifications: it subverts the modernistic sense of "subjectivist" certainty in the concepts such as "national self-determination" or "general will" (which were the building blocks of the modern nations throughout last two centuries). Instead, it emphasizes different aspects of psychoanalytic categorical framework (enjoyment, linguistic structure of experience, unconscious etc.) and tends to perform a sort of "blending" of individual and collective level of identification.²

By emphasizing *impossibility and lack* – claiming that all human existence is organized around traumatic emptiness which cannot be confronted directly and without mediation of discourse and affective rituals – we want to avoid most common problems of the mainstream contemporary theories of nationalism, which in many respects tend to operate within sharp dichotomies such as rational-irrational, civic-ethnic, subjective-objective, individual-collective etc. The schools of thought such as cultural theory, social constructivism, or ethno-symbolism all wish to perform a conceptual clarification or taxonomical deduction, even if they claim that the nation cannot be deduced from any objective criteria. Hence, even Benedict Anderson, in what many will denominate as the "postmodern" approach,³ leaves no place for epistemological uncertainty about his definition that nations are *imagined communities*.

From the Lacanian perspective, conceptual or factual indeterminacy, far from being an obstacle or a relativist tendency, in fact represents the very precondition for confronting the contestability of the nation. Whether we are talking about nation as a spiritual principle (Renan, 1882: 41-55), a state of mind (Kohn, 1965), a civ-

¹ Psychoanalysis is not confined to the study of singular human subjects Cf. Stavrakakis (2020), especially the chapter 18 on collective subjects (Jones, 2020), and Frosh (2014), who delineates contributions of psychoanalysis in fields of mass psychology, theory of ideology and more general social and political theory.

² From a Lacanian perspective, the pervasiveness of the concept of nation does not result from its semantic density nor its conceptual rigor; it is much closer to the "shamanistic" concept of mana with all its ambiguities (Levi-Strauss, 1989).

³ Anderson himself *après-coup* defined his approach as "Marxist modernism married to post-modernism *avant la lettre*" (Anderson, 2006: 227).

ic religion (Hayes, 1960), a legitimizing principle (Cipek, 2007), or about the differences between the French, German or East European model of nation building (Hobsbawm, 1993; Hroch, 1996: 78-98), our aim should not be to say that, since we cannot set any objective criteria, we are left to operate in subjective categories of consciousness, spirit, and mind, etc. Any of these conceptual models can be functional under certain conditions, no matter its objective or subjective validity. What we want to accentuate is that replacing objectiveness with "subjectivism" does not solve the problem, but simply inverts it. Instead, we want to propose a psychoanalytic model that will take into account some relevant Lacanian categories and prepare it for the concrete studies of the various manifestations of nationalist ideologies.

The structure of the paper is as follows: first, we delineate basic Lacan's concepts (desire, lack, Symbolic order, subject) important for the subsequent appropriation of Lacanian psychoanalysis in the field of nationalism studies. Second, we systemize three axes around which Lacanian categories converge once they enter the field of political analysis of collective identities. Thirdly, we lay out our vision of the proper analytic framework for the application of Lacanian psychoanalysis in a more empirically oriented cases of nationalism. Finally, we briefly sketch the example of one such application in the case of Justice and Development Party's (AKP) Turkish nationalism by analyzing one of their banned campaign ads from 2014 municipal elections.

Lacanian interventions in the theory of nationalism

There are two fundamental elements of Lacan's teaching subsequently used for analytical purposes in the field of social and political studies of collective identities (like nations, classes or gender identities) – *Symbolic order* and *enjoyment*. Lacan's theory revolves around the notion how to translate mainstream psychoanalytical categories into vocabulary of structural linguistics and how to interpret the subjective experience through linguistic categories. However, at the same time it is focused on the *limits* of symbolically constructed experience, on how the human subject always remains alienated by the language he/she speaks and how the moment of final reconciliation between the subject and the Symbolic order never arrives (Lacan, 1986). Extrapolating Saussure's relational notion of language in a psychoanalytic context (as a structure in which meaning is possible only through differential relations between otherwise meaningless elements), Lacan claims that the human subject will inevitably be caught in an anonymous symbolical network of names and concepts through which its subjectivity will, at the same time, be made possible and bared from its full realization (Evans, 1996: 190; Lacan, 2006: 428-430). Endless play of differences, as the constitutive mechanism of language, constructs an alienated subject whose identity depends on the recognition in the discourse of Other; that is, the subject can "exist" only insofar as he finds a place in the network of signifiers which he/she can never fully master (Lacan, 2006: 713).

This kind of symbolic allocation and alienation of subjectivity is realized through a mechanism that Lacan calls *unconscious*. He emphasizes that unconscious is not the "seat of the instincts" or something strictly internal to one's psyche as Freud suggests; instead, he claims that "unconscious is structured like a language" and belongs to an external space of concepts, symbols and norms which are imposed on the subject through the process of socialization (Lacan, 2006: 413). Lacan insists that the unconscious needs to be comprehended as "the effects of speech on the subject", as a "dimension in which the subject is determined in the development of the effects

of speech" (Lacan, 1986: 149). Hence, the Lacanian type of subject is someone who is not the sovereign of its own subjectivity, whose deepest desires and core identities are shaped by the internalization of the Symbolic order through the formation of unconscious (Lacan, 2006: 679; Homer, 2005:48).

This is where Lacanian *ontology of lack* enters into the picture (Austin, 2016). Since language "exists prior to each subject's entry into it", subjugation to it entails a fundamental and irreducible loss and a prohibition of some primordial enjoyment – Lacan terms it *jouissance* (Lacan, 2006: 413-414). This loss is the precondition for an entrance into the "normalizing" realm of the Symbolic (Law), "founded on that very prohibition" (ibid: 696). In the process of internalization of language and its regulatory patterns, subject is forced to articulate its needs and desires through linguistic means and in this process, Lacan claims, irreversible losses a certain pre-symbolic immediacy, which he/she will continually and unsuccessfully try to reclaim by occupying various social roles and positions. In other words: "[Symbolic] Law is introduced with the sacrifice of all unmediated access to a pre-symbolic real, a sacrifice entailed in the advent of language" (Stavrakakis, 1999: 34). Such lack (or radical negativity of one's identity), however, is seen as a productive force that fuels the process of identification around partial encounters with the lost *jouissance*; encounters which will never fully integrate the lost immediacy but will serve the purpose of reconciling with the "lacking" symbolic existence.⁴

In Seminar XX, Lacan says: "The subject is nothing other than what slides in a chain of signifiers, whether he knows which signifier he is the effect of or no" (Lacan, 1999: 50). Through this sliding of various signifiers (father, mother, worker, friend, partner, enemy, etc.), of which none can be said to be its essence, subject assumes identification. Lacan speaks of *identification* and not about *identity* because identity implies closure and mastery over oneself, while identification is a never-ending process of dealing with its own "lacking existence". What is important to emphasize in Lacan's teaching is that by using the vocabulary of structural linguistics to conceptualize the mechanisms of subjectivity – by formalizing it through concepts such as signifiers, Symbolic order etc. – it is very easy to jump from individual to collective level of identity. Moreover, one of the cornerstones of Lacan's theory of subjectivity is that the sharp distinction between an individual and a collective level is not sustainable anymore. As we have already pointed in the case of the concept of unconscious, the boundaries between what belongs to an internal space of emotions, desires or needs and what is imposed on the subject from the externality of language and norms – are blurred and overlapping. The irreducible presence of otherness in the self prevents us from drawing a sharp distinctions and Lacan states it very clearly: "[W]hat solution could seriously be expected from the word 'collective' (...), when the collective and the individual are strictly the same thing?" (Lacan, 1999: 30). Lacan goes so far to suggest that even a face-to-face communication is achievable only by a mediation of Symbolic order (big Other). His most provocative statement, "There is no such thing as the sexual relationship", should be interpreted in such a manner that there can be no assimilation of otherness, our contact with other human being, even with our sexual partner, is achievable only if it is already "registered" and "regulated" by proper symbols and norms.

From such perspective, one's identity can never be fully sutured and harmonious. This is the reason why in Lacan's teaching we are faced with the fragmentation of su-

⁴ "It is only by sacrificing its pre-symbolic enjoyment that the social subject can develop desire" (Stavrakakis, 2007: 196).

jective experience into three "ontological" registers: *Symbolic*, *Imaginary* and *Real*. If *Symbolic* is an insufficient remedy to the problems caused by the signifier, *Imaginary* is the means of self-deception regarding lacking psychological structure, a form of self-preservation in the face of existential incompleteness. On the other hand, the *Real* is the name for those unsurmountable limits and impossibility of every subjectivity, a "traumatic kernel" that permanently delays the ontological closure of symbolic "reality" around the satisfaction of one's needs and desires. When the perspective of the *Real* is used to apprehend the processes of identification, it follows that every identity is constructed around an impossibility that permeates every attempt of its final closure. Only *possible* identity is a temporary effect of the struggle for recognition, in which the Other (as unconscious or Symbolic order) appears as the guarantor of my own "social" existence and status (Kojève, 1990: 11-14). In other words, "to exist one has to be recognized by an-Other" (Homer, 2005: 26).

This is where most of the political and social uses of Lacan's theory enters the stage, metamorphosing into a thesis that the collective forms of identification such as nation or classes are nothing but an always-already failed attempt to avoid the traumatic encounter with *Real*. On the one hand, this is congruent with some of the tendencies of the modernist view on the concept of nation; especially its fictional and artificial character which is seen as the ideological device operative in the context of growing social uncertainties in democratic societies. Nation is a form of misrecognition of one's past and tradition, says Renan⁵ back in 1882, perceiving the process of nation building as a result of a certain "historical error", a way in which a group of people misperceive their own identity-foundations and retroactively construct/projects that which was taken in the first place as "objective" and self-evident. There can be no objective principles – neither linguistic, ethnic nor geographical – from which one can derive the essence of the nation. This argument was put forward again and again from the Marxist (Hobsbawm, 1993), postmodern (Anderson, 1996, Watson, 1977, Brubaker, 1998) or sociologico-functional perspective (Gellner, 1983).⁶ Lacanian approach, as we will see later, deepens this conceptual indeterminacy, making of it a starting point to discern the specific discursive mechanisms and affective rituals (such as myths, ideological narratives or cultural codes) that sustains the national edifice (Mandelbaum, 2020a: 51-53).⁷

⁵ In a way, Renan's questions are still of paradigmatic significance for theories of nationalism: "Why is Holland a nation, when Hanover, or the Grand Duchy of Parma are not? How is that France continues to be a nation, when the principle which created it has disappeared? How is that Switzerland, which has three language, two religions, and three or four races is a nation, when Tuscany, which is so homogeneous, is not one?" (1996 [1882]).

⁶ For example, Seton Watson points out that definitional designations have often served to "prove that in contrast to the community to which the definer belonged, some other group was not entitled to be called a nation" (Watson, 1977: 4). He concludes: "no 'scientific definition' of a nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists. All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one" (ibid.: 6). Similar lines of this argument are found in Brubaker and Balibar. Brubaker is calling us to renounce any attempt to conceptualize the Nation as a real, 'substantial' entity; instead proposing to conceive it as a set of "idioms, practices and possibilities" contingently formed and institutionalized as a sort of event, not as a result of the logic of development (Brubaker, 1996: 10-15). Balibar is on the other claiming that there can be no "neutral position or discourse here" since every discourse on the Nation is embedded in a certain 'national' position of enunciation (Balibar, 2002: 57).

⁷ Stavrakakis (1999: 52) underlines this: "From millenarianism to the Communist Manifesto and up to Green ideology, we know that every political promise is supported by a reference

On the other hand, Lacan's teaching blends the *macro* and *micro* level of the nation building process. Everyday nationalism or banal forms of nationalism are important as much as the decrees and policy making of the political and social elites: in other words, nationalism progresses both from above and below (Billig, 1995; Seky, 2009). "Ordinary people are not simply uncritical consumers of the nation; they are simultaneously its creative producers through everyday acts of consumption" (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 550). This argument is in line with Žižek's, for example, that a nation can only perpetuate itself insofar as "some real, non-discursive kernel of enjoyment" is able to be materialized in "a set of social practices and transmitted through national myths that structure these practices" (Žižek 1993: 202). However, these ritualized practices of enjoyment are not equivalent to discursive practices, making discourse theory and analysis only a part of a larger analytic perspective (Wodak et al., 1999). Žižek insists there is always something that resists discursive closure, something that cannot be sustained exclusively by symbolic means. That is, an "element which holds together a given community cannot be reduced to the point of symbolic identification: the bond linking together its members always implies a shared relationship toward a Thing, toward Enjoyment incarnated" (Žižek, 1993: 200). The remainder of this impossibility of closure is inextricably linked with the subject's organization of its desire, the way in which desire arises due to a prohibitive entrance in the realm of the Symbolic (desire transgresses the law, at the same time constituting it), and is perpetuated in relation to that which is irreducibly lost, a primordial enjoyment, *jouissance*.

In order for a certain "object" to be "sublimated" as the cause-of-desire, there has to be a fantasy that anticipates an answer to the question why we would rather desire this object instead of another, which tells us what is in the object more than the object itself (Žižek, 2002: 164; 1993: 40).⁸ This is why, in relation to objects of desire, fantasy has a transcendental status, insofar as it organizes our desiring universe, teaching us how to desire (Žižek, 2006: 38; 2002: 182). Žižek claims that what happens here is the operation of inverting the 'semantic emptiness' into fantasmatic fullness in such a manner that the enjoyment (incarnated in the objects of desire) becomes the connective tissue of a "formal symbolic structure" (without which it would be unable to sustain itself through long periods) (Žižek, 1997: 7, 53). In other words, the way community organizes its enjoyment creates what is called the "national Cause", which is according to Žižek "the privileged domain of the eruption of enjoyment into the social field" (Žižek, 1991: 165). Therefore, a discursive condensation of national identity is supplemented with a "manipulation of a certain symptomatic

to a lost state of harmony, unity and fullness, a reference to a pre-symbolic real which most political projects aspire to bring back".

⁸ What is important to emphasize is that these objects do not have a substance of their own; rather, they acquire their status of an object only as a result of a certain affective investment: every object can become an object of desire if it becomes a part of one's own economy of desire (Evans, 1996: 8). However, possession of such objects will never fulfil the desire: since desire is organized around lack, it has a circular structure and the constant search for this "objects" perpetuates the desire itself; object's intrinsic features are just the temporary means of this libidinal economy, creating the "motion of desire". As Evans points out, 'the objet petit a is not the object towards which desire tends, but the cause of desire. Desire is not a relation to an object, but a relation to a lack' (1996: 38). In other words: "Desire, strictly speaking, has no object [...] desire is a constant search for something else [...] it does not seek satisfaction, but rather its own continuation" (Fink, 1995: 90). Consequentially, such partial objects have intersubjective structure, insofar as they emerge in relation to the Symbolic order where they try to conceal or normalize the structural lack.

enjoyment" (Stavrakakis, 2007: 81) and is directed towards the void, both the void of subjective desire and the void of the Symbolic order itself (Mandelbaum, 2020a: 58).

Unlike modern or postmodern theories of nationalism, which are both organized around artificial and discursive character of nations and national ideologies (Anderson, Watson, Smith), Lacanian approach is more concerned with the "re-production" of national identity than with its "constructedness" (Stavrakakis, 2007: 189; Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras, 2006: 145). For example, Stavrakakis claims that focusing only on constructedness "cannot explain the durability and salience, the depth and longevity of national identifications" (Stavrakakis, 2007: 192). This is one of the crucial point about Lacanian approach: that national identity resist the post-modern and poststructuralist thesis about fluidity and instability of social identification; that is, "anyone subscribing to the idea of identity as invariably a fluid, multiple construction, must surely be challenged by the persistence of certain identifications" (Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras, 2006: 146-147). National identity has to be grasped on the one side as an effect of "discursive structuration/representation" and, on the other, springing from the relation towards *jouissance*, insofar as "the mobilization of symbolic resources has to be coupled with an affective investment grounded in the body in order for national identity to emerge" (Stavrakakis, 2007: 199-200; Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras, 2006: 148-149).

"Materialized" enjoyment is always-already organized around some excessive and unbearable impossibility, around some mysterious X that can only be "verbalized" through empty tautologies, seducing signifiers and enchanting images imbued by strong emotions. In addition, if the fantasy provides the coordinates for desire and if the object of desire signifies the void of the Symbolic order offering a promise of its resolution (Mandelbaum, 2020a: 58; Stavrakakis, 2007: 75) – this process will always remain insufficient. Enjoyment of the national community can never reach the intensity of the pre-symbolic *jouissance* that it tries to replace and incarnate. Therefore, national forms of enjoyment have two sides: on the one side, they offer the partial *jouissance*; while on the other they explain why this *jouissance* can never be fully consumed (Stavrakakis, 2007: 197). The irreducibility of antagonism onto the external Other involves the so called "theft of enjoyment" (Žižek, 1991: 165; Stavrakakis, 2007: 198). That is, internal impossibility of full closure and harmonious enjoyment of the national community is externalized in the form of the national enemy whose existence threatens "our way of life". The national specular Other is the fantasmatic figure whose presence prevents a national community to achieve its full potential, to establish itself in its totality, and who "steals" this possibility while at the same time it is capable of enjoying itself in what the national members are prohibited or unable to do (Žižek, 1993: 203-204).⁹

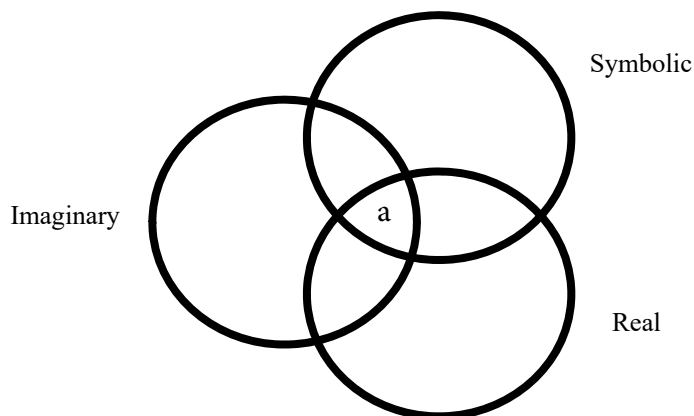
Towards an analytical framework

From this point, we can build our analytical framework for the study of the 'empty' edifice of nationalism that emphasizes the importance of strong affective, libidinal investments, supported and permeated by socially produced fantasies as conditions of possibility for the durability of national identifications (Stavrakakis and Chrysoloras, 2006). These identifications, according to the perspective put forward, can

⁹ In that respect, the figure of the 'thief of enjoyment' or ethnical Other is a symptom of the impossibility of the 'ontological' closure of society, and in the same time it represents the imaginary gesture needed to preserve the possibility of achieving this closure/harmony in the future.

be apprehended methodologically by a quadruple system (of Ideal-Ego, Ego-Ideal, Super-Ego, and the specular Other), originally used in psychoanalysis to describe personal subjective identifications, each of which has three experiential dimensions: Symbolic, Imaginary and Real.

Let's start with explaining the relationship among these three experiential dimensions. Lacan (1999: 124) describes it by using the concept of the Borromean knot he borrows from the mathematical field of topology (see *Picture 1*).

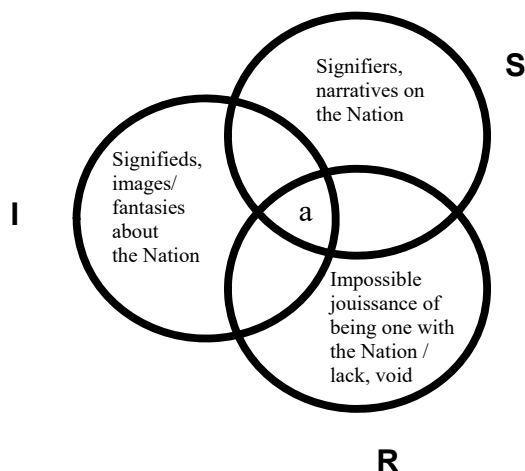


Picture 1. Borromean knot

Each of the overlapping rings represents one of experiential dimensions and at its center, where all three chains overlap Lacan places the *objet petit a* (object a), or the cause of desire, such as inexplicably and unconditionally beloved nation in nationalist discourses, an ineffable treasure that emotionally overwhelms members of the Nation as such, or unfathomable enigmatic and sacred people-land. It is an element that is something more than what they think they are, a shared surplus that determines them but at the same time remains something indeterminable.¹⁰ The nation is named and described in Symbolic order by using various narratives or chains of signifiers with cultural, historical, social, and political meanings, which are imagined, conceived and fantasized in the Imaginary order. However, the Real of the nation is always something beyond comprehension, impossible to describe or to imagine, the Thing,¹¹ *cosa nostra*, the place of primordial impossible jouissance of being one with the Nation, as well as traumatic lack and void of its unattainability (see *Picture 2*).

¹⁰ Such surplus is metaphorically approximated by Croatian nationalist singer Marko Perković Thompson in his lyrics: "Genes, genes of stones, fire burns inside of me, genes, genes of stones, this is the way we're born". Here the object a is imagined in a double form: first in the form of impossible object as a basic unit of a body, and second as usually deadly bodily state of burning, generalized to all 'true' Croats.

¹¹ Although we can differentiate between an *objet petit a* and a Thing in a matter of chronological evolution in Lacan's teaching, as Evans does (1996: 207-208), we are keener to interpret Žižek's (1993) use of the notion of Thing as emphasizing that which is in the object a in relation to the Real insofar as it cannot be domesticated through fantasmatic scheme but remains beyond language.



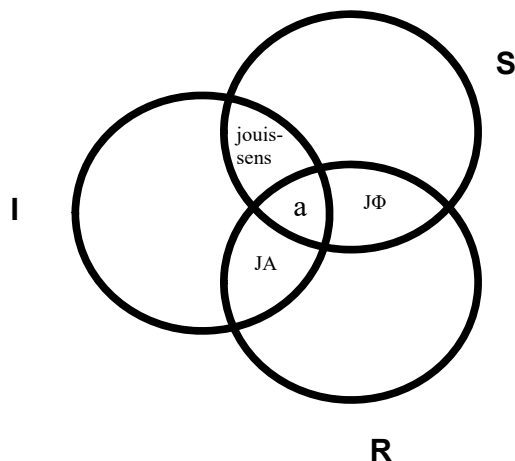
Picture 2. General content of experiential dimensions

However, there are three more overlapping areas of two neighboring orders, with the significant function in the construction of discourse, meaning, and partial enjoyment in nationalism (see *Picture 3*). More precisely, through the Borromean knot, Lacan was also able "to topologically situate different modes of [possible, partial] jouissance as different modes of enjoying the object a" (Greenshields, 2017: 210), considered here as the fundamental hole of an empty edifice of the Nation.

Jouis-sens or enjoyment of meaning arises at the intersection of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, articulating itself in fallacious and synthetic totalization (Greenshields, 2017: 254) of the Nation. It arises from the interplay of these two orders, where the Imaginary supports the Symbolic through its idealistic images and by them gives it a luring sense of consistency or illusion of functional completeness. This interplay accomplishes temporary fixation of the social meaning and could be explained as a socio-historical and psychical creation of figures/forms/images (Castoriadis, 1987: 3), or condensed images of social myths. The "ideal" image of the Nation is of course the place from which its members want to be seen and recognized, but it is at the same time the *screen* through which they approach the Otherness, the otherness in themselves and in their community, and the Otherness of the human condition as such (the latter being the fundamental void which must be assimilated and concealed before all the others).¹²

JA (jouissance of the Other) (Lacan 1974/2016; Dimitraïdis, 2017: 6) finds its articulation in overlapping between the Imaginary and the Real, as well as (in comparison to *jouis-sens*) outside language, and serves the function to fill up the void of the encounter with the enigma of the Other. It is the first instance of dealing with the Real and anxiety such encounter produces, containing a mobilizational and affective capacity. Such encounter can be resolved by (re)coursing to the Other's imaginary demand (for love), "before which the *desidero* prostrates himself" (Greenshields, 2017: 211), accepting it unquestionably as it is usual in secular re-

¹² This brings us back to the difference between the subject and the process of subjectivization: while the latter would be consumed by the process of assimilation of Otherness in the forms of national and ideological narratives, the subject could be found only in the place of the void from which this futile imaginization takes place (see Žižek, 1999).



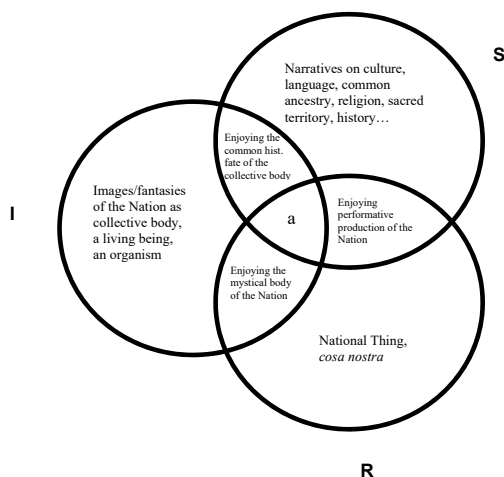
Picture 3. Three forms of partial jouissance

ligion of nationalism to assure his/her own imaginary recognition by the Other. Another option is a failure of imaginary identification with the Other, which can lead – by the logic of 'all or nothing' of the Imaginary and its ambivalence between narcissism and aggression – to the fantasy of steeling the enjoyment, where the fear aroused by facing the Real Other could become rage. Anyway, both solutions are based on mythical and extra-symbolic totalization, and should be differentiated from $J\bar{A}$, the jouissance of not-all, or enjoying the Other's lack. $J\bar{A}$ involves a realization that the Other is not perfect and unified entity, and as such is lacking, and further brings about traversal of the fundamental fantasy (in this case about the Nation), as well as a re-inscription and development of subject's own Symbolic from that lack (Chiesa, 2007: 188-189).

Finally, at the place of wedging the Symbolic and the Real appears $J\Phi$: the phallic or semiotic jouissance (Lacan, SXXI 11/6/74: XIV9), articulated in slippage between signifiers as enjoying the interminable metonymy of desire (Greenshields, 2017: 254) in various narratives which play with and repeat signifiers to constitute the object *a*. However, as desire cannot be perfectly communicated through language (ibid: 130), such activity is condemned to constant deferral of meaning and never "produce a whole in the form of a seamless and lackless union with the totalised Other" (ibid: 174). However, such deferral, which, by the logic of desire tends to reproduce itself, does not produce destitution of identity, but constant repetition expressed in rituals, speeches, myths, heroic and even small anecdotal stories, confirming by that performative character of the Nation.

In order to provide more nuanced description of national identification, we shall proceed with explaining already mentioned quadruple system of identificatory instances of Ideal-Ego, Ego-Ideal, Super-Ego, and the Other.

The first important identification regards the image representing 'what we would like to be' as the Nation. Such definition of what are the proper attributes of a nation, the proper national identity, and who are the purebred members describes the *national Ideal-Ego* (see Picture 4). Its symbolic dimension consists of various master-signifiers, such as culture, language, common ancestry, religious denomination, sacred territory, heroic history or something else that can be used for the description



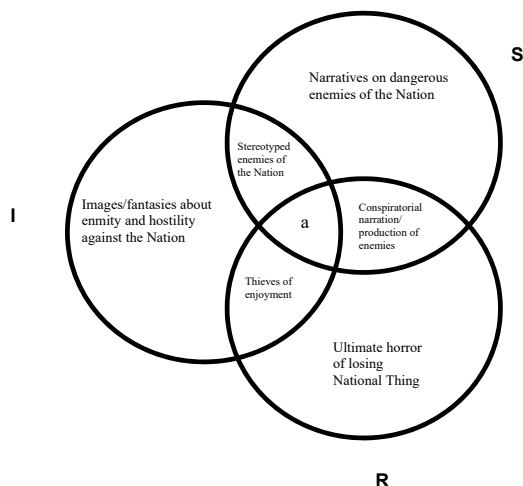
Picture 4. The work of national Ideal-Ego

of the exclusive status of the Nation. *Jouis-sens* dimension would be an enjoyment of being a part of monolithically imagined collective body or national being whose members share allegedly common history which is always constructed retroactively. Such collective body reproduces itself through 'homogenous empty time',¹³ conceived as ancient or even eternal entity that gives meaning and purpose to the otherwise small, unimportant, individual existence of its members. Consequently, this is enjoyment in sharing the common historical fate.

From the optics of nationalist *jouissance of the Other*, for such collective body, a Homeland, its members should be joyfully or even ecstatically ready to kill and to die. Renata Salecl (1993: 16, 144) describes it as a death worth dying and explains that such imagining of a collective body and sacrifice has its historical roots in Christian imagery of the community as the mystical body of Christ and his death as one worth dying. In that sense, enjoying the mystical body of the Nation is the core of *jouissance of the Other*. The Real of the national self-perception is always something beyond comprehension, an indescribable way of life, tautologically 'touched' in expression "it is what it is", the Nation qua 'Thing, *cosa nostra*' (Žižek, 1993: 201), an ineffable treasure that should emotionally overwhelm members of the Nation as such. Simultaneous admiration to it and witnessing/producing its performative existence as *phallic jouissance* finds its expression in numerous narratives, rituals and other symbolic practices turning around master-signifiers of the Nation. Taken together, these Ideal-Ego dimensions construct the object *a* as an element that is something more than what they think, feel, write or perform they are, a shared surplus that determines them but at the same time remains something indeterminable. However, this surplus is only partially produced by the Ideal-Ego.

Constitutive outside of the Ideal-Ego, as well as its mirror image is the *specular Other* (see *Picture 5*), comprised of agent(s) who are described by nationalist discourse as a danger for a sustainable national community, those who allegedly conspire against the Nation, hate it and whose main goal is to destroy it. Usually it includes not only outer, but also inner enemies, treacherous members of the Nation, deceived

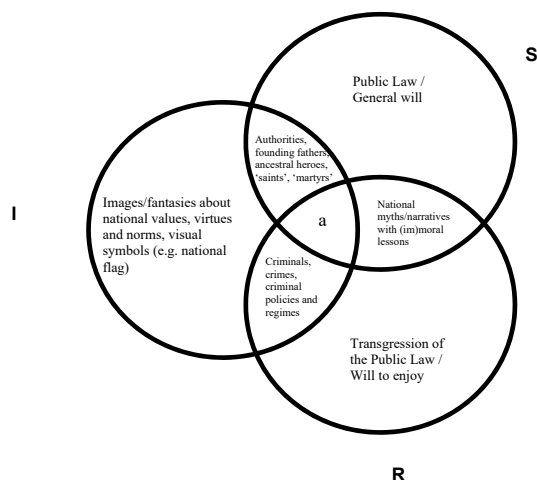
¹³ Walter Benjamin in: Anderson, 2006: 24.



Picture 5. Specular Other of the Nation

or polluted by some anti-national ideology. They are imagined through historically formed stereotypes of ominous and powerful figures, whose powerfulness retroactively gives importance and meaning to the Nation. As such, this is a *jouis-sense* construction. Frustrating "'other's' noncorrespondence [to one's wishes] aborts the resolving identification, and this produces a type of object that becomes criminogenic" (Lacan, 2006: 93), i.e., a dangerous figure who steal our enjoyment of being in the Nation (JA), experienced at the level of the Real as ultimate horror. $J\Phi$ is articulated as traumatic encounter with enigmatic and dreadful desire of the specular Other, and devised in the process of conspiratorial narration which emphasizes the attribution of responsibility, based on projections and informed by simplified historical and political interpretation.¹⁴ Such paranoid conspiracism is a response to a parting of the knot that reknits it with a narrative artifice that, in its extreme form, resurrects the Other as an all-knowing shadowy totality, who allegedly pulls all the strings behind the scenes. Taken together, such interpretations and fantasies produce and reinforce specular relationships, as well as paranoid mirror imaging, with the aim to prevent theft of a precious object a.

¹⁴ Among numerous conspiracy theories articulated during and after the Homeland war in Croatia in 1990-ies, still very popular is the one which states: "Serbian intellectuals and politicians collaborating with the Yugoslav Peoples' army have initiated the wars in Croatia and Bosnia with the aim to create Greater Serbia". In 2020 survey of the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb, this statement was supported by 63,4% of Croatian citizens. Although this statement correctly names the main actors who instigated, conceived and conducted the war, formulated in this way, it establishes a chain of equivalence between them and simplifies the political field of the complex process of disintegration of the SFRY. Another illustration of the simplified narration about the desire of specular Other was given in 1991 by Croatian intellectual and politician, Vlado Gotovac: "Let's be honest: Serbs have permanently disrupted Croatian efforts for the creation of the Croatian state in the nineteenth century and prevented it throughout the twentieth century. It is simply a fact and there is nothing to discuss about it. There are, of course, many Serbs who behaved differently, but if we are talking about an effective majority, it is clear that it has always been against the Croatian state." (Gotovac, 1991: 39). The last sentence only diminishes the importance of mentioned behavioral varieties, i.e., it only confirms the reduction of historical complexity.



Picture 6. Work of National Ego-Ideal and Super-Ego

Furthermore, an antagonism between the Ideal-Ego and the specular Other has a wider socio-symbolic background and support for its repetition. In that sense, the antagonism is articulated in the name of another instance of identification, which is described in Lacanian psychoanalysis as the *Ego-Ideal*, or the instance for whom a collective (should) perform the previous, Ideal-Ego role (see *Picture 6*). Here the main question is: for whose gaze members of a national collective (should) want to be perceived as likeable and worthy? Who is to be impressed? What are the normative cornerstones in whose respect, admiration and obedience one feels enjoyment? The answer is the national socio-symbolic order represented by its authorities, founding fathers, ancestral heroes, national 'saints' and 'martyrs', institutions of symbolic importance, etc., whose values, virtues and norms are written in some public law or widely shared in society as its legitimation (*jouis-sens*). Such order has its own symbolic and imaginary dimensions.

However, according to psychoanalysis, there is also a necessary underside of this public law, its obscene side and transgression of the Ego-Ideal, expressed as the *Super-Ego*. Although it has its own imaginary and symbolic dimension, it belongs primarily to the order of the Real. The Super-ego works through the imperative, especially expressed in the command 'Enjoy!' and imposes: 'tyranny...a senseless, destructive, purely oppressive, almost always anti-legal morality' (Lacan, 1988: 102). As such, it is nothing but Sade's 'Supreme Being-in-Evil' (Lacan, 2006: 773), a frightening figure whose enjoyment transgress civilizational restraints. It expresses itself in the aspect of national identification that is often implicit, publicly denied, or in secret positive identification with historical figures, regimes, policies or deeds usually (or from the position of public law) considered as criminal, aggressive, disgusted and horrifying. In the Super-egotistic identification, they become praised and considered true heroes, who are joyfully admired (JA). For example, such admiration was accompanied by widely used phrases after the post-Yugoslav wars: "Hero not a criminal!" or "We are all... [some accused or convicted military officer]" (*jouis-sens*). This is certainly the dark side of national identification. It expresses itself, e.g., in the right-wing populist movements as an underside of proclaimed general will in the form of promising 'fullness to come' or impossible full *jouissance*, which is nothing but the will to enjoy

(Mandelbaum, 2020b). In that sense, JΦ expresses itself in national myths and other narratives whose lessons contain moral and immoral messages. While the former messages are emphasized, the latter are concealed but implied, as in statements that "The operation Storm was clean as a teardrop!" or "It is not possible to commit a war-crime in defensive war!", despite obvious cases of war crimes.¹⁵

According to our supposition, these four instances of identification are strongly related. Ideal-Ego and the specular Other are related in the form of mirror-imaging and through the mechanism of projection, while the Ego-Ideal and Super-Ego serve as normative support for Ideal-Ego. As concrete political articulations, they could form various complexes of national ideology and consequently, they can be seen as formative for political imagining, writing, speaking and behaving of nation members.

Applying the framework: Justice and Development Party (AKP)

It is impossible to fully apply our analytical framework in this paper. Nevertheless, we can demonstrate what can be seen through these 'lenses' by using one exemplary case. For this purpose, we analyze a specific television campaign ad of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) from the 2014 municipal election. We have consciously selected the ad that clearly articulates numerous aspects of the nationalism we defined in our psychoanalytic framework. The purpose is to show how the previously explained four identification instances are articulated and offered as a political message to the electoral body in one short and compact form of political communication. The ad was forbidden by the "High Election Board because it was found to use religion and nationalism in violation of article 298 of the election law".¹⁶ It is titled: "Millet Eğilmez, Türkiye Yenilmez", which means "The nation doesn't succumb, Turkey can't be defeated".¹⁷

The Turkish flag appears at the beginning of the ad, flying on an enormous flagpole, visible to the whole country, clearly signifying the national Ideal-Ego as a sacred symbol of national pride. In the next scene the flag is immediately endangered by the enemy (specular Other), loosely represented as the 'man in black', who is trying to break the mechanism holding the flag on the top of the flagpole through his 'machination'. This is a metaphorical attempt to steal the enjoyment in national pride (JA). Such a fuzzy image of the enemy allows everyone among the targeted audience to project his/her own various fears on to it, and to imagine who the enemy could be. In this sense the thief of enjoyment, who produces the Real ultimate horror is defined here, but giving a meaning (jouis-sens) in the form of socio-historically developed stereotypes is left to be applied by each citizen. The phallic jouissance (JΦ) of the specular Other is articulated through a speech by Tayyip Erdogan taking

¹⁵ How authoritarian regimes deal with criticizing national myths of heroes and martyrs is discernable e.g. from China's infamous 'Hero and Martyr Law'. See more at Newsweek.com, 2021.

¹⁶ See more at: Endtimescafe.wordpress.com, 2014.

¹⁷ This ad is publicly available at several Internet addresses. The one on Vimeo contains English translation of Tayyip Erdogan's speech enunciated in this ad. At our request this translation was checked by Turkish scholar Doğan Gürpınar (Istanbul Technical University), who confirmed its accuracy, but due to stylistic reasons he recommended we should use the one published at Wikipedia.com, 2021. For that reason, we cited the latter version, which is only slightly altered. Please watch the ad before you continue to read our analysis. Link: <https://vimeo.com/89687376> (Vimeo.com, 2014).

place alongside these scenes, describing enemies and their actions as 'scoundrels', 'the heathen's hand', 'madman' 'a shameless invasion', '...shall put me in chains'. The speech also deals with the Ideal-Ego features, by mentioning the endangered 'one true homeland', 'paradise land', and 'heavenly peace of land' (jouis-sens) that should be shield with body of its nationals. The 'blood and soil' racist ideology which expresses jouis-sens of both Ideal-Ego and Ego-Ideal is especially prominent in the next verses:

*View not the soil thou treadest on as mere Earth – recognize it!
 And think about the shroudless thousands who lie so nobly beneath thee.
 Thou art the glorious son of a martyr – take shame, grieve not thine ancestors!
 Martyrs would burst forth should one simply squeeze the soil! Martyrs!...
 Neither thou nor my kin shall ever be extinguished!*

This ideological construction of an inter-generational bond, realized through the life of worth sacrificing for the nation as a martyr is further supported by the imaginary picture of a collective body gathering itself from all around the country to form some sort of Leviathan around the national flag. This is an expression of a common fate of the collective body, comprised of singular bodies of people from all social classes, who show their national determination through getting to the place of the falling flag in order to raise it up again (jouis-sens) and enjoy the mystical body of the Nation (JA) (see *Picture 7*).

For the further articulation of enjoying the mystical body of the Nation (JA), the following verses are especially symptomatic:

*Like a roaring flood I am, I would trample my banks, I would exceed,
 I shall tear mountains apart, exceed the Expanses and overflow.
 For only then, shall my fatigued tombstone,
 if there is one, prostrate a thousand times in ecstasy,
 And tears of blood shall, oh Lord, spill out from my every wound,
 And my lifeless body shall burst forth from the earth like an eternal spirit,
 Perhaps only then, shall I peacefully ascend and at long last reach the heavens.
 So ripple and wave like the bright dawning sky, oh thou glorious crescent,
 So that our every last drop of blood may finally be blessed and worthy!
 Neither thou nor my kin shall ever be extinguished!
 For freedom is the absolute right of my ever-free flag.*

Beside the metaphorization of enjoyment in the Nation qua Thing (JA), conceived as "Enjoyment incarnated...structured by means of fantasies" (Žižek, 1993: 201), there is an attempt in these verses to assimilate it symbolically and to cope with radical negativity of death (JΦ), no matter how such accomplishment is limited and in the final instance impossible. It is also a form of fabrication by imagining the nation as a natural phenomenon (jouis-sens). The signifier that is most important here is 'flood', described as an overflowing powerful primordial stream that covers over the country like undead and indestructible dense liquid, similar to Lacan's (1986) concept of lamella as irrepressible 'undead' object-libido. According to these verses, such a flood expresses the indestructibility of the kin, and it is so powerful that it can even resurrect dead ancestors. Furthermore, only in this flood and under the Ego-Ideal symbol of the crescent it is possible to 'reach the heavens', or the white star, and ecstasy in *jouissance*. The place in heaven as eternal bliss that is promised to be attained, together with the fantasmatic figuration of collective body as undead lamella are attempts to restore the *objet petit a* (Nobus, 1999: 168).



Picture 7.

Turkish Leviathan imagined by AKP. Source: Vimeo.com, 2014.

Regarding the Ego-Ideal dimension of identification, it is indicative that the whole text is imbued with religion (as an articulated Symbolic order) through several references to God as a ruler of human life and protector of endangered religious temples, whose words are forever spreading over the homeland and give a final meaning (jouis-sens) to individual life and death. Another important Ego-Ideal figure whose gaze is directly exposed at the end of the ad is President Erdogan, usually portrayed as a protective and beloved father.¹⁸ Further embodiments of the virtue are 'martyrs' or heroic ancestors who sacrificed their lives for the sacred land, as well as determined young man from the ad, who bravely jumped from the top of enormous Leviathan to raise the national flag, holding only the cord in his hand. We never saw if he managed to survive that dangerous jump.

Nevertheless, the question is where is the Super-Ego? In our opinion, it is expressed in the imperative tone of the President's voice. Furthermore, by applying to the lyrics he recites a peculiar content reduction technique, similar to John Carpenter's from the movie *They live!* the whole text can be reduced to the following verses:

*Fight the enemy to protect your homeland!
Your mortal life is not important here,
Obey to His word, to His work on earth,
Which is made sacred by the sacrifices and blood of your ancestors,
Follow them!
And they will raise again through you and become one big flood
of power and enjoyment that will reach the heavens
and become immortal and free.*

Translated in a psychoanalytic manner, it seems that the whole poem imposes the cult of sacrifice, as well as destructive behavior, otherwise considered as criminal in the eyes of public law. Such (self)destruction is transcended into heroic deeds in the name of the Nation. Nevertheless, there is another 'subsurface', shadowy and

¹⁸ See another ad for presidential elections in 2014: Youtube.com, 2014.

obscene super-egotistic aspect of this poem. What president Erdogan is enunciating is nothing but selected verses from the national anthem, reordered to fit to the visual part of the ad. Nevertheless, he does not recite the verses usually played during official ceremonies, but those usually left out in such occasions. The first 8 'official' verses are more benign in their content than the 33 we analyzed. These 33, usually unspoken, openly express the ideology of blood and soil, legitimated by religion, clearly showing the nationalist ideology of the AKP and its leader. Hence, by using our analytical lenses, we have discerned the most important dimensions of enjoyment of nationalist identification, both its promising and ominous aspects.

Conclusion

Lacanian psychoanalysis offers a distinctive methodological framework for the analysis of nationalism. In this paper, we wanted to build upon existing research and try to systemize previous contributions for a more empirically oriented framework. First, we claim that there are three important theoretical aspects of the application of Lacanian psychoanalysis in the field of political analysis of the collective identities: 1) discursive construction of identities via production of empty signifiers; 2) specific ways in which certain (national) community organizes its enjoyment through ritualized intersubjective relations; 3) and encounter with the impossibility of final closure of the community, reflected in the figure of national specular Other ("thief of enjoyment") whose function is to project internal inconsistencies and contradictions in an external form.

Secondly, we expanded these theoretical contributions by offering the method of quadruple system – of Ideal-Ego, Ego-Ideal, Super-Ego, and the specular Other – originally used in psychoanalysis to describe personal subjective identifications. Linking it with the Lacanian triad of Symbolic-Imaginary-Real we tried to specify the ways in which rituals of enjoyment and figures of discourse are interrelated and can be further concertized in an analysis of specific case of the AKP's Turkish nationalism.

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Uživanje u praznom zdanju: nacionalizam kroz očiste lakanovske psihoanalize

Sažetak Ovaj rad potvrđuje metodološki potencijal lakanovske psihoanalize za teoriju nacionalizma. Iz lakanovske perspektive, nacionalna svijest i samoodređenje mogući su samo u fantazmatskom okviru kroz (krivo) prepoznavanje i retroaktivnu konstrukciju. Nacionalna imaginacija je oblik prijenosa, neophodnog za performiranje nacije kroz izmišljene tradicije i rituale. Međutim, onkraj simbolizacije i imaginarnog (krivog) prepoznavanja, uvijek postoji nešto što se opire diskurzivnom zatvaranju, povezano sa željom subjekata i organizirano nemogućnošću potpunog, neposrednog užitka. Uzimajući zajedno sve ove aspekte, ovdje gradimo analitički okvir za proučavanje nacionalizma, a koji se sastoji od četverostrukog sustava identifikacija, ideal-ego, ego-ideal, super-ego i zrcalni Drugi, te ga dodatno ilustriramo na primjeru turskog nacionalizma AKP-a.

Ključne riječi subjekt (nacije), ime-nacije, uživanje, identifikacija, ideal-ego, ego-ideal, super-ego, zrcalni Drugi

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