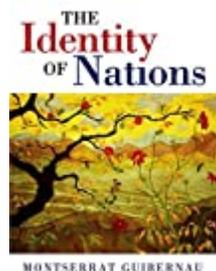




**Monserrat Guibernau.** *The Identity of Nations.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007. 248 S. \$69.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7456-2662-8; \$26.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7456-2663-5.



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### **M. Guibernau: The Identity of Nations**

In the age of globalisation, when the adjective *atypical* seems to have lost its meaning to describe the behaviours, habits, and material culture of a region or a country, Monserrat Guibernau takes the concept of *national identity* and analyzes how it is transformed, both across time and from different points of influence. The book tries to answer questions about how nations come into being, how they construct their identities or which strategies they are using to transform, and be integrated in a new context.

The book begins with the definition of national identity. From the 2nd to the 4th chapter, Monserrat Guibernau presents some social and political events that act as trigger for the transformation of national identity. The 5th and 6th chapters focus on the strategies that nations are following to reject these external influences to preserve their national identity. The last chapter introduces the concept of cosmopolitanism to compare national and cosmopolitan identity.

National identity is defined as *a collective sentiment upon the belief of belonging to the same nation and of sharing most of the attributes that make it distinct from*

*other nations* (p. 11). At first impression, the definition contains a high emotional level and, for Monserrat Guibernau, this is an important part of her five dimensions of what constitutes national identity. The other four components are culture, history, territory and politic, and their description is based on a strong theoretical debate. An important aspect of Guibernau's contribution is to consider that *nation's identity* is not a synonym of the *state's identity*. Therefore it is possible the existence of nations without states like Catalonia in Spain, Quebec in Canada or Scotland in Great Britain. However, the political division of territories in states cause that governments want to construct a *nation-state identity*. Images, symbols, common enemies, national education, citizenship are used as instruments to build this common identity. Guibernau emphasizes the rule and the power of the media at present to influence society or to transform the national identity; either to be open according to the new global situation or to be strong against foreign influences.

The transformation of national identity is exemplified in the book with the cases of political measures in Spain

and Canada and their respective nations, the impact of immigration in Austria and the necessity of a sense of belonging to a supranational political organisation such as the European Union.

In the first example, Monserrat Guibernau presents the devolution and the creation of institutions that contribute to the dynamism of civil society as the best way to keep nations within a nation-state like Canada, Spain or Great Britain. She bets on the federal structure (like Canadaâs) as the most adequate option to preserve the diversity and refuses political centralism (like in Spain during Aznarâs government) because it led the nations within Spain to claim for independence.

How immigrants have influenced the construct of national identity? Guibernau begins with the definition of ethnic group based on Max Weber to specify the difference between an existent nation and the ethnic group of migrants who come into a country. The most important difference established by Guibernau is the wish to auto-determination that nations have. The influence of other ethnic groups to the national identity depends of many factors, for example the number of immigrants, their ethnic identity, the legislation etc. but the most interesting with this chapter is the presentation of integration models as the gettoization, assimilation and multiculturalism based on a strong theoretical discussion. Austria should be the example to illustrate the theoretical part of the chapter; however, after a really precise exposition of facts, numbers and models of migration phenomenon in Austria, in my opinion it is not clear how migrants have influenced the construction of Austrian identity.

If there is a constructed identity, this is the transnational European identity. One of the most irrational components of national identity, but at the same time the strongest, is the psychological or emotional part and this does not exist for Europe. So according to Guibernau, the European identity is a non-emotional one, which is try-

ing to be created by the politicians on the basis of possible collective memories and wishes. This kind of supranational organisation foster the emergence of a novel type of shared identity.

The analysis of the affirmation of national identity is the aim of the 5th and 6th chapters. The USA as the historical melting pot of cultures and races, where everybody was welcome and invited to become American, is to be questioned by economists, journalists and historians. The ethnic component is nowadays still a handicap, when referring to the âauthenticâ American identity and the large number of migrants makes it difficult within American society to construct a steady national identity free of internal and external conflicts. Migration is also one of the foci in the political programs of radical right parties in Austria, Italy and France. They reject the multiculturalism purpose of the USA because it is dangerous for the pure âwhiteâ identity and defend ethnoculturalism, this means âthe composition of society of separate self-contained ethnic and/or cultural unitsâ (p. 154).

Monserrat Guibernau closes the book with a reflection on cosmopolitanism and its identity compared to national identity. She establishes the distinctions between global and cosmopolitan culture. Remarkable is the role of values, she proposes. Cosmopolitan culture or identity is characterized by the importance of values such as tolerance, equality regardless of nations or regions, and not by the common cultural objects that represent a possible global identity.

The book describes the challenges of nations to create or preserve their identities in a more and more changing international scene with a very important presence of migration movements. The theoretical content of the book is relevant to recognize the statement of the research in subject such as migration, integration, and definition from concepts such as nation or identity.

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