

**Unfinished Imagined Communities:**  
**The Theoretical Implications of Nationalism in Latin America**

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This draft of our paper is still work in progress. In particular, the historical narrative needs more elaboration. We also apologize for any language mistake in the paper. English is not the first language of either of the authors and since this is still work in progress, the draft has not been edited for language.

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## Introduction

Benedict Anderson's highly acclaimed *Imagined Communities* (1991 [1983]) argues that nationalism emerged in Spanish America. "Creole Pioneers" invented national communities in their struggle for Independence from Spain: communities that were limited, sovereign, and imagined.

Nationalism in early 19th century Latin America provided a "blueprint" for nation-building around the globe. We can identify three main critiques of Anderson's argument in the recent literature on nationalism. First, scholars point out that Enlightenment ideas about popular sovereignty and citizenship originated in Western Europe (Greenfield 1992; Guibernau 1996). According to this argument, Latin American nationalist elites, such as Simón Bolívar, relied on these European ideas in their struggle for independence. Second, nations are not the horizontal communities portrayed by Anderson.

Nationalisms have their internal cleavages that differentiates between full and part or strong and weak citizens; the latter being those groups that are marked as not fully belonging to the nation (Lomnitz 2001). Third, scholars identify a bias in Anderson's argument that narrates the story of economic and political elites and does not incorporate the agency of subaltern populations in the formation of national communities (Lomnitz 2000, see also Thurner 1995 and Mallon 1992).

We agree with these critiques. Yet, in this paper we argue that Anderson's assertion about Latin American origins of nationalism was prescient, although not in the way he imagined it. It is precisely the failure of Latin American nation-builders to incorporate popular masses and ethnic and racial groups into the nation that makes the region central to the analysis of nationalism. The study of nationalism in Latin America presents us with the issues encountered by both contemporary post-colonial nations in the periphery and core countries in the contemporary World System: contestations over the construction of national boundaries and criteria for inclusion into the national community. Therefore, the study of the

limits of Latin American nationalism and its different trajectories is key to understanding the issues and challenges confronted by modern nation-building projects.

Post-colonial nations in Spanish America were certainly not a model for copying: “republican institutions, common citizenships, popular sovereignty, national flags and anthems” did not come from the “American welter” (Anderson 1991: 81). Rather, nation-formation processes in Latin America are the first to illustrate the limits of even civic or liberal forms of nationalism.<sup>1</sup> The Spanish American cases highlight how national communities based on ideas of civil liberty and equal rights for all citizens of a sovereign state are at the same time highly exclusionary towards the ethnically distinct population living within these boundaries. As Centeno (1999) argues, nineteenth century Latin American nationalist elites not even attempted to incorporate the masses into the nation (Centeno 1999).

The first goal this article pursues is to contribute to our understanding of Latin American nationalisms. We analyze nationalisms in Latin America as a process of construction, challenge and renegotiation of the boundaries of the nation. The empirical narrative tracks the different historical paths through which the relationships between members of a national community and those who are excluded from the nation were redefined. The second, and more important goal, however, is to examine how the Latin American experience informs theories of nationalism. All modern-states are confronted with the challenge of including ethnically and racially distinct populations within the territorial and symbolic boundaries of the collectivity, either through the demands of historically excluded sectors of the population (such as in contemporary Latin America) or through international mass migration (such as in contemporary Europe). In that sense, Anderson was right to point that post-independence Latin

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<sup>1</sup> Typologies of nationalism often distinguish between civic, cultural inclusive nationalisms from ethnic, culturally exclusive nationalisms.

American nationalism was a model. Just not a model of imagining nations but a model for thinking about the limits of national communities and the challenges to those limits.

### **Unfinished Imagined Communities: a Theoretical Framework**

We follow Anderson (1991) in defining nations as imagined political communities and incorporate Wallerstein's (1991) idea that nations are a form of peoplehood corresponding to the organization of the modern World System in independent states. As a form of "peoplehood," the challenge for nationalism has been to draw the boundaries of the collectivity, create sentiments of belonging, and establish the principles of organization and mutual relationships within the national community. National identities are constructed around certain norms and values, cognitive orientations and symbols that serve as boundary markers flagging membership in the collectivity and establishing the rules as to who and how can join the national community. Images of the nation are also built around myths of origin and stories about the intrinsic qualities of the members of the nation. These myths and stories are historical constructions, but they are often experienced as primordial elements of collective life (Eisenstadt 1998).

Nationalism, in fact, refers to two distinct social processes of constituting nations (Calhoun 1997). On the one hand, nationalism is an ideology put forward by the state or nationalist social movements to achieve social control and legitimation or to mobilize the people for purposes of state-building or interstate competition. In this sense, the idea of the nation is related to the legitimation of authority in modern states. As a distinctively modern phenomenon, nationalism is linked to the concept of popular sovereignty. National communities are conceived of as sovereign collectivities, with "the need of popular consent for the legitimacy of government" (Guibernau 1996:53). Nationalism also evokes

the principle of fraternity, that a sovereign people is composed of a community of equals (Anderson 1991; Greenfield 1992). The creation of nations as imagined communities is achieved through public education, public rituals, and mass mobilizing institutions such as the army or political parties (Gellner 1983).

At the same time, nationalism is a cultural script with “profound emotional legitimacy” and “self-evident plausibility” (Anderson 1991:4) through which members of nations conceive of social reality and frame their aspirations. Nationalism in this sense refers to a discourse reproduced in daily habits and routines that serve as a basis for the formation of social solidarities, and collective and individual identities. The power of nationalism as a cultural script is that it provides a plausible explanation for the life-world of most people: A life-world determined by the paramount and pervasiveness of states conceived as nation-states. State institutions constitute the preeminent institutions that shape the daily lives of individuals. These institutions define the opportunities and rights of individuals based on ideas about who forms part of the national community. National belonging in turn becomes a source of understanding of the world and of constructing solidarity.

These two analytical distinct features of nationalism—state ideologies and cultural scripts— are highly interrelated. State ideologies might become gradually translated into hegemonic cultural scripts. For instance, in the early stages of nation-formation, founding myths might have been invented and elaborated by state elites. Later on, these myths might have become part of the implicit knowledge flagging membership in the national community. At the same time, nationalism as cultural scripts enjoys relative autonomy from state control proves more resilient to attempts of indoctrination and manipulation through state elites. Therefore, cultural scripts provide subordinate groups such as subaltern actors or excluded elites with a frame of reference for challenging predominant national ideologies perpetuated by

the state. These challenges might use cultural scripts to either formulate explicit alternatives to existing national ideologies or to transform and extend the established boundaries of the nation.

Nations have been imagined by scholars, nationalist, and common people as homogeneous collectivities. However, nothing could be further from the actual historical record. The task and challenge of nationalism has always been to homogenize different collectivities, a task completed with varying degrees of success. Nations are crossed by internal cleavages that determine degrees of belonging and exclusion. Groups excluded along ethnic or racial lines or immigrants who arrive to new shores often put forward alternative definitions of the nation, which aim to reshape national imageries and to expand its internal boundaries. These alternative imaginations have in times been adopted by social movements in their attempts to challenge the predominant vision of the nation. Sometimes, such challenges from below have forced elites and the state to change national ideologies, expanding its boundaries and bringing in excluded groups into the fold of the imagined community. Nations and nationalism are then intrinsically unstable political and cultural constructs, subject to renegotiation and change. At any particular point in time people may experience the nation as eternal and immutable, yet this feelings are often a reaction to the constant shifts and tensions to which the nation as an imagined community is subjected.

This historically informed perspective allows us to analyze the process of nation-formation as a power conflict for the terms of inclusion among different groups located within the same sovereign state. This symbolic-political struggle is carried out by defining and redefining the criteria of membership to the national community and the intrinsic characteristics that define its members. As a result, nationalism is never a finished project. This has been emphasized by subaltern and postcolonial studies, which have critiqued the focus of the nationalism literature on elites as predominant social actors in constructing

national imageries. Yet, subaltern groups have always engaged in alternative imaginations of the nation and the organization of relationships between its members (Chatterjee 1993; Mallon 1992). This is an important critique that needs to be incorporated into the study of nationalism. We want, however, to move beyond exploring the role of subaltern nationalism in bringing in the “perspective from below” and investigate instead the ways in which nationalism is challenged and change as a result of political and social conflict. For this purpose, we focus on broad historical changes in the trajectories of nationalism in three Latin American countries —Mexico, Peru, and Argentina. Through an investigation of the paths of nationalism in these three countries we hope to show how nationalism in Latin America is in fact central to our understanding of the contemporary dynamics of nationalism. Our historical accounts of nationalism in Mexico, Peru, and Argentina are painted with broad traces. Our goal in this paper, however, is not to tell the history of these countries or to test empirically our argument. Rather, the following empirical narratives are used to illustrate our theoretical argument. This form of presenting our empirical evidence allows us to advance our analytical insights through carefully contrasting and comparing these three cases.

We distinguish two main forms of nationalism in Latin America, corresponding to two different broad historical periods and each characterized by different patterns of inclusion and exclusion. The first type we call Liberal-Oligarchic nationalism. The nineteenth century establishment of post-colonial states featured a form of civic nationalism that emphasized the unity of the nation in its political institutions. Two characteristics distinguish this type of nationalism in Latin America: First, it was forward-looking: The nation was projected into the future and could only be achieved by adopting universal liberal forms of political and economic organization, rather than being imagined by references to a mythical ethnic past (Brading 1998). Second, the national community was imagined and established on the basis of the

perpetuation of the ethnic and racial hierarchies exclusions of the colonial period—what Quijano (1993) calls the coloniality of power—and in the creation of new class based barriers to inclusion.

The success of liberal-oligarchic regimes in generating economic development in combination with the highly exclusionary form of nationalism prevalent during this period opened the way to a second type of nation-formation, popular nationalism. Challenges by subordinate groups of ethno-racial exclusion have taken place throughout the nineteenth century. Their contentious movements, however, were mostly unsuccessful in redrawing the boundaries of the nation (Mallon 1992; Thurner 1995). Yet, the nations imagined by nineteenth century Latin American liberals could not contain the societies that their political and economic policies created. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Latin American countries experienced rapid economic development that propelled the formation of urban middle and working classes and a landless peasantry. These new social groups challenged established forms of national exclusion and mobilized for the political and social rights. expansion of the imagined community. Such challenges forced Latin American countries to rethink the terms of national membership and to expand the boundaries of the nation to include ethnic and racial minorities. This is where several models of popular nationalism – most of them created around the ideology of *mestizaje*<sup>2</sup> - originated.

Popular nationalism attempted to imagine nations by reference to its mythical past and its alleged essence. In this sense, this form of nationalism does not perpetuate the forward-orientation of liberal-oligarchic nationalism. Its form of inclusion was assimilationist, *mestizaje* in its different variants attempted to “overrule” previous ethnic or racial differences by envisioning an overarching, culturally homogeneous national identity as an alternative. In doing so, this type corresponds to the European

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<sup>2</sup> This ideology envisions the national community as composed of mestizos, physically both Spanish and Indian and a product of the clash between the Spanish and Indian cultures.

models of nationalism in their civic or ethnic forms, both imagining the nation as a culturally homogenous community.<sup>3</sup>

We argue that in the present we are witnessing new subaltern movements resulting from the ethno-racial exclusions produced by different forms of popular nationalism. Examples of these challenges are the Zapatista movement in Mexico, the Maya movement in Guatemala, and the indigenous movement in Ecuador and Bolivia. These movements demand an expansion of those national boundaries and a renegotiation of relationships between members of the nation to allow for the recognition of cultural pluralism. This challenges to the assimilationist forms of popular nationalism are still unfolding and we do not know what its outcome will be. Nevertheless, these challenges to the boundaries and defining features of the nation are an example of the situation faced by the contemporary world, either resulting from internal ethnic strife or processes of international mass migration.

The following sections provide a more detailed narrative of the first two historical sequences of nationalism in Latin America. Even though we aim to identify more general trends for the region, our empirical illustrations draw primarily on three representative cases, Mexico, Peru, and Argentina. These three countries illustrate variations in the forms of nationalism we described above. Through a contrast of the historical trajectories of these three countries we can identify more clearly the commonalities and differences in Latin America nationalism and elaborate on their implications for the theoretical understanding of nationalism. Mexico is our central case because it represents the historical paramount case of popular nationalism based on *mestizaje* as well as the limits of this model. Peru provides an

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, civic nationalism in nineteenth century France took an assimilationist stance in promoting the transformation of strangers, peasants, and ethnic minorities into Frenchmen. While nineteenth century German nationalism propelled an ethnic-cultural understanding of the nation, it imagined a culturally homogeneous community in the light of subnational political fragmentation with strong regional forms of identity attached (Brubaker 1992).

interesting contrast to the Mexican case because *mestizaje* never informed the nation-building project of the state. Argentina contrasts with Mexico by showing how popular nationalism with an assimilationist orientation plays itself out in a country with a very different demographic composition and population history, often referred to as a settler society. The final section elaborates on contemporary challenges to national boundaries in Latin America and elsewhere in light of the historical analysis of unfinished national communities in the region.

### **Civic Nationalism and Ethno-racial Exclusion: the National Project of Latin American Liberalism**

The post-colonial states in Latin America were formed as a consequence of independence, in part resembling the boundaries of administrative units from the late colonial period. The process of independence began as regime protest against the Spanish monarchy. The colonial regime faced increasing resistance from Creoles, or Spaniards born in the Americas, against increasing taxes and the role of Spanish America as the primary supplier of wealth for the empire. Referring to their status as subjects to the Spanish king, Creoles rejected their classification as a “colony” and demanded political equality between Spain and America (Guerra 2000: 75). Intra-elite conflicts between Creoles and peninsular immigrants intensified in the late colonial period. Creoles mobilized to improve their access to wealth, power, and status vis-à-vis the Peninsulares who usually obtained the most influential political, administrative, and clerical positions, and formed the group of the wealthiest merchants in Spanish America (Brading 1998: 18).

At the same time, these increasing tensions between peninsular immigrants, the Spanish Crown, and Creole elites was embedded in a shared interest of preventing popular insurgency. The late colonial period witnessed the mobilization of subordinate groups against their ethno-racial exclusion and the emergence of alternative subaltern visions of the political community. In Peru, the Tupac Amaru rebellion in the 1780s envisioned the return of an Inca empire after ending colonial oppression (Mallon 1992: 41-42). In central Mexico, the multi-ethnic Hidalgo and Morelos movements in 1810 promoted the expulsion of all peninsular Spaniards and demanded ethnic equality for all “Americans” united as “brothers in Christ” (Brading 1998: 31) under the banner of the Lady Guadalupe. In both Mexico and Peru these popular movements were heavily repressed by Creole-led forces (Mallon 1992: 43-46). In Argentina, on the other hand, popular movements played a more prominent role in the process of independence with different elite factions attempting to secure or gain political power through mass-based support. (Halperin Donghi 1987).

Ultimately, the mobilization of Creole elites provided the basis for insurgent nationalisms in Latin America. Creole contention shifted from regime protest, turning into a movement for gaining political and economic independence from Spain. . As Creole elites emerged victorious from the independence war they confronted a double task. The first one was to build viable states on the ruins of Spanish colonial administrative units. The second task was to create nations in societies that have been hitherto deeply divided along lines of class, and ethno-racial colonial categories. These two process of state-building and nation-formation were deeply intertwined, and would prove formidable challenges. It is only in the 1880s—about six decades after the end of the independence wars—that the post-colonial states would be consolidated as the center of political authority and legitimacy in these three countries.

The consolidation of the state in Mexico, Peru, and Argentina marks the beginning of a hegemonic of liberal-oligarchic nationalisms, which lasted until the second decade of the twentieth century. These ideological projects were inspired by liberal ideas and promoted the positivist goals of order and progress, and envisioned national development through individual initiative freed from corporate restrictions (see Mahoney 2000: 31-35). In this sense, nationalisms in Latin America were forward-oriented, the imagination of the national community was projected into the future, achieved through the implementation of liberal political and economic institutions. At the same time, these liberal-oligarchic imaginations of the nation were deeply influenced by European racial thinking that attributed the economic underdevelopment and the political turmoil in the region to its racial composition (Knight 1990: 78) .

In Mexico, the consolidation of the state was achieved under the oligarchic rule of Porfirio Diaz in the late 1870s. The pivotal goal of this authoritarian state was the economic development of the country with the support of foreign investments. Porfirian Mexico experienced a period of rapid economic growth and agrarian commercialization, but also of very limited political participation (Knight 1992). During the Porfiriato, official national ideologies envisioned the imagined community as realized in progress and modernization. The creation of national rituals and civic myths, particularly around the figure of Benito Juarez, the liberal political leader and founder of Mexican Republicanism in the mid nineteenth century, reinforced these civic features of Mexican nationalism (Gutierrez 1999: 168-170). Also Morelos and Hidalgo, the leaders of the most prominent popular movements in the 1810s, gained status as heroic figures: Their insurgencies were redefined as the foremost initiative to found the Mexican Republic (Brading 1991). At the same time, Mexican nationalism incorporated some popular elements

and portrayed independence from Spain as an act of restoring the Mexican empire emphasizing the continuity between Aztec past and Mexican present against century-long Spanish oppression.

While pre-columbian civilizations gained presence in Mexican nationalism during the Porfiriato, Mexico did not imagine the indigenous population as part of the nation – even though both Benito Juarez and Porfirio Diaz were of indigenous origin. Rather, Mexican liberal elites embraced a project of whitening, hoping that racial improvement would bring the nation into modernity. The “Indian” was seen as an obstacle to national development. Some Porfirian thinkers, however, viewed education as a medium of racial improvement. Through schooling Indians would be assimilated into modern subjects of the state, thereby foreshadowing indigenista discourse in the post-revolutionary period (Knight 1990: 79). At the same time, the economic development policies of the Porfiriato and rapid agrarian commercialization rather than education propelled the break-up of indigenous communities, their massive urban migration, and increasing racial miscegenation.

In Perú the post-colonial state consolidated in the mid-1890s into what is known as the Aristocratic Republic. . As in the case of Mexico, state elites, pursued Peru’s economic modernization as the most prominent political project. The reach of the Peruvian state, however, was more limited than in Porfirian Mexico. The Peruvian elites in Lima controlled the coast, but they could only rely on unstable alliances with regional oligarchies in the highlands to maintain the authority of the central state. Autonomous indigenous presence in the highlands and their political action remained a much larger threat for Peruvian elites than the ones in Mexico. In a similar vein, rapid economic expansion was mostly confined to the coastal regions around Lima (Gootenberg 1993). Modernization processes like the emergence of agroindustrial haciendas unfolded much slower and on a smaller scale in the Andean highlands compared to Mexico (Albó 1999; Knight 1992).

Features of Peruvian liberal-oligarchic nationalism resembled Mexican national ideologies during the Porfiriato. Peruvian nationalism was infused with liberal ideas of progress and order. Late nineteenth century Peruvian thinkers like Javier Pardo, forming part of the limeño elite, turned European racial theories upside down and projected a national community as based on “constructive miscegenation” into the future (de la Cadena 2000: 15-17). The Indian as a “pure race” signified backwardness in the imagination of national development. Only through the remedy of education Indians would become modern members of the nation. A particularity of Peruvian nationalism was to link membership in a racial category to a specific geographical location. The modernizing spaces of the coast were imagined as the natural environment of Spaniards and their mestizo descendants, while indigenous people were viewed as inhabitants of the Andean highlands (de la Cadena 2000). In this sense, the spatial limitations of economic development were reflected and reinforced through racialized images of national space.

In Argentina, the liberal-oligarchic state is finally consolidated in the 1880s marking the end of the conflicts between provincial and Buenos Aires elites. Julio Roca, the hero of the “Conquest of the Desert” war became president and inaugurated a period of relative political stability. Roca’s military campaign had completed the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous groups of Central Southern Argentina and finished opening the frontier for settlement and ranching. Under the liberal elites Argentina would experience an export-oriented economic boom that would put it among the richest countries in the world around the turn of the twentieth century.

Like in Mexico and Peru, Argentinean nationalism incorporated liberal ideas about progress and development. In contrast to Mexico, however, liberal elites in Argentina constructed the historical continuity of the nation not in reference to a pre-Colombian past, but evoked the development of a liberal republic which was already latent in the colonial past (Halperin Donghi 1987a). In its forward-

orientation, Argentinean nationalism even projected a complete demographic reorganization of the national community into the future. The nation imagined by the paramount Argentinean intellectual of the nineteenth century, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, was not grounded in some mythical indigenous past, but rather had to be created through European immigration (Halperin Donghi 1987b; Sarmiento [1845] 1990; Shumway 1991). In this aspect, racial theories informed the thinking of liberal elites like Sarmiento: Argentinean national ideologies envisioned Anglo-Saxon immigrants as superior to Indians, Blacks, and Spaniards. Large numbers of migrants indeed arrived in Argentina in the nineteenth century, but most of them were from Southern Europe and lesser extent, from Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Moreover, against the expectations of Argentinean elites, the immigrants they maintained their ethnic communities and identities and would not assimilate and become the cradle of a new nation.

The liberal Argentinean elites were assimilationist and expected immigrants to merge into the nation. The immigrant's desire to keep their distinctive identity sometimes led to xenophobic reactions. Yet, in the late nineteenth century the expectation of assimilation did not produce a strong nationalist discourse. For example, Sarmiento, the main proponent of public education as a nation-making tool in nineteenth century Argentina, strongly criticized the schools of the Italian community because they allegedly provided an Italian education. Against this, Sarmiento argued that Argentinean schools do not provide an Argentinean education but simply educate. For him the goal of education was to create modern citizens of an industrial nation, not to instill Argentineanness.

The situation will change at the turn of the twentieth century. At that point, the need to consolidate the control of the state over a population that had a large percentage of immigrants led the conservative governments to attempt to "nationalize" the masses through the introduction of an "Argentinean" education and nation reinforcing rituals into the schools—the same thing that Sarmiento

bemoaned two decades earlier. Yet, their discourse of the nation and their political practices did not include the masses of immigrant workers or the mestizo population of the interior of the county (Halperin Donghi 1987b).

In summary, by the turn of the 20th century, the post-colonial project of state consolidation and nation-building had become reality. The Latin American states had become part of the world economy in ways that produced relatively large wealth—at least for the elite—and they had been organized politically along the lines of liberal political discourse. Latin American countries witnessed rapid agrarian commercialization, the creation of a transportation infrastructure and the growth of cities and incipient industries. National ideologies and discourses were forward-oriented by conceiving the nation as based on the success of liberal reforms and economic modernization rather than grounded in a mythical ethnic past. In this sense, nineteenth century nationalisms were also highly exclusionary, they imagined only a small segment of the population, wealthy and literate, as forming part of the national community.

### **Transforming Nationalism: Contested Transitions towards Popular Incorporation**

The processes linked to rapid modernization led to changes in social structure: Latin America saw the rise of urban middle and working classes and a landless peasantry in the early twentieth century (see Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992; Knight 1992).

Yet, the liberal-oligarchic regimes excluded the new urban middle- and working-classes from political participation with the result of strong contentions for political power. In the economic domain, the liberal attack on communal lands had rendered many indigenous communities landless and pauperized. Latin American countries displayed increasing levels of popular protest and political crisis

during this time period. Demands for political and economic inclusion also challenged the legitimate symbolic order in Latin American countries and therefore forced changes upon the imagination of the nation. Demands of political and social inclusion eventually led to the crumbling of the liberal oligarchic social and symbolic order, forcing the emerging elites to rethink the boundaries and criteria of national membership.

Mexico and Peru saw subordinate groups mobilize for their rights as member of the nation. A large immigrant population posed a challenge to Argentina to rethink the boundaries of the national community. Hence, the three countries experienced common pressures, yet those pressures were handled in very different ways, differences that derive in part from the structural differences between them, and in part from different political contingencies.

The most prominent example for this transition towards more popular forms of nationalism is Mexico. The Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) resulted in an encompassing reorganization of the social and political structure in Mexico, combined with renegotiations of the national imagined community. More inclusive forms of membership gained political significance and portrayed the national community as composed of mestizos, physically both Spanish and Indian and a product of the combination of cultures between Spanish colonizers and the indigenous population.. As represented in Jose Vasconcelos' and Manuel Gamio's writings, Mexican nationalism glorified the pre-Columbian past, which was reinterpreted as a central identity marker distinguishing the "cosmic race" of mestizos. Compared to the liberal-oligarchic period, this redefined imagined community based on ideas of *mestizaje* included large parts of the population living within the boundaries of the Mexican state and provided the ideological basis for envisioning the nation as a culturally homogeneous entity (Powell 1996: 45).

The indigenous population remained excluded from national discourse in Mexico. The category “Indian” gained a more restrained usage and was applied mainly to individuals living in communities in remote areas like Chiapas and Oaxaca, not speaking Spanish as their first language. While not portraying indigenous people as an obstacle to development anymore, mestizo nationalism envisioned their assimilation into a homogeneous national community (Morris 1999). Policies reflected these transformed ideas about the nation, they promoted the Spanish as official national language, the implementation of mass schooling dispersed mestizo nationalism among the populace (Gutierrez 1999). As President Lazaro Cárdenas (1934-40) coined it, the aim of these policies was “not to Indianize Mexico, but to Mexicanize the Indian” (in Morris 1999: 375).

While Mexico represents a transition towards a more inclusive form of nationalism based on *mestizaje*, a comparable transformation of nationalism in Argentina was grounded in populist ideas. In Argentina, this transition towards popular nationalism proceeded in two broad steps. The first more inclusive national ideologies became prevalent with the raise of the hegemony of the mass-based Union Civic Radical (UCR –Radical Civic Union, which we will refer to as the Radical Party) in the political arena. As an organization representing the emerging middle classes in Argentina, the Radical Party gained political power in 1916 with the extension of universal suffrage for men. The party propelled claims for political inclusion and civic rights. On the level of ideology, Radicalism represented itself as the broadly inclusive embodiment of the Argentinean national community. Since immigrants were among the Radical’s constituencies, they pursued a strong assimilationist discourse—although Radicals would occasionally fall into xenophobic positions when confronted with immigrant led protests. Radicalism contributed to the incorporation of immigrants into the Argentinean society and to their self-understanding as members of an Argentinean nation. Overall, Radicalism constituted a first ideological

backbone for the emergence of popular nationalism in Argentina promoting the inclusion of the middle classes and the immigrant populations into the polity as well as the national imagined community.

The full-blown emergence of popular nationalism, however, was only completed with the emergence of Peronism, an integrationist movement centered around the leader figure Juan Domingo Peron. In the 1930s and 1940s a new migration wave, this time from the interior provinces came to Buenos Aires to seek employment in the expanding industry. It was among this emerging working class that Peronism would resonate and find support. The effectiveness of Peronism was located in the combination of the politics of redistribution and the politics of representation and the creation of a powerful political movement that became a source of popular national ideology and discourse. Although Argentinean national discourse does not have an official language to express racial differences, the language in which the elites referred to the interior migrants was only slightly veiled as a racialized discourse. References abound to Peronists supporters. The big achievement of Peronism was to include into political life and the symbolic imaginary of the nation the working class and the darker skin masses from the interior of the country.

Peronism incorporated these marginalized and racialized masses of workers into the polity and the nation, yet it would do so in a way that would create a long term cleavage within the imagined community: In the 1940s and 1950s, Peronism promoted a class-based understanding of the nation, emphasizing the integration of the “people,” the popular sectors, into a corporatist political order. However, the people were not portrayed as working class but as a broad group of productive contributors to the nation. The people were seen as opposed to the “oligarchy.” Similar to Radicalism, Peronist national discourse was assimilationist and combined visions of Argentina as a nation of immigrants with visions of Argentina as a hispanic and catholic nation. Yet, at the same time that it was a

movement of political and social integration, Peronism created a profound schism within Argentinean identity. Peronism equated itself with the nation and focused its symbolic center around the figure of its leader, Juan Peron. Those that did not accept this vision, were excluded from the Peronist construction of the symbolic realm of the nation. For the next five decades of national life, Argentinean identity will be organized around the division of Peronists and anti-Peronists.

At the same time, Latin American countries were not predetermined to display a full-blown transition towards popular forms of nationalism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast to Mexico and Argentina, in Peruvian nationalism based on more inclusive national imageries based on *mestizaje* or populist ideas did not gain political significance. In Peru, in fact, the oligarchic-liberal order proved more resilient than in the other two cases. The Peruvian state withstood the pressures for popular inclusion without developing a form of popular nationalism until the late 1960s. The result was constant political instability and social protest.

There were indeed pressures for inclusion into the national community. In the 1920s Indians and their political allies organized in the Comité Pro-Derecho Indígena Tawantinsuyu and mobilized for the recognition of Indians as citizens and members of the nation. Their inclusion would be achieved through extending political rights and education, but without renouncing the Indian identity (de la Cadena 2000: 89-87 ). While the Augusto Leguía regime (1919-1930) temporarily supported the Comité in a brief populist opening aimed at expanding its base of support, as soon as the regime consolidated Leguía would abandon any inclusive postures and return to an excluding alliance with the highland elites.

The 1930s witnessed the emergence of APRA (Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana—American Popular Revolutionary Alliance) a nationalist-populist party, comparable to the Mexican PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) or the Argentinean Radical or Peronist party. APRA embraced

mestizaje as a national ideology. Yet, despite being the only real political party of Peru, APRA did not manage to gain power and implement its politics for five decades.<sup>4</sup>

Peruvian nationalism did not ignore the indigenous population. During the late 1940s, the Peruvian state, influenced by indigenista thinkers like Valcárcel developed a bilingual education policy and promoted Inca rituals such as Cuzco's Inti Raimi as national symbols (de la Cadena 2000). Yet, Peruvian indigenismo was mostly, an elite ideology that emphasized a glorious Indian past but did not have much room for contemporary indigenous people. As opposed to nationalism based on *mestizaje* in Mexico, Peruvian nationalism did not incorporate ideas of racial or cultural mixing in favour of imagining indigenous ethnic purity. This ideological pattern was also reflected on the level of policy. The Peruvian state never engaged in policies for the integration of the indigenous or mestizo masses. In this sense, ethno-racial distinctions remained a prominent feature of Peruvian nationalism and propelled a bipolar image of the national community: Indian highlands, white and mestizo coasts, white and mestizo cities, Indian countryside (Mallon 1992). Policies in Peru advanced Quechua and Spanish literacy campaigns and did not advocate the assimilation of the indigenous population. Only during the military dictatorship of Velasco Alvarado from 1968 until 1975 the Peruvian state engaged in a short and finally unsuccessful experiment of promoting the creation of a mestizo-nation. Hence, Peruvian nationalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century continued to reproduce stark ethno-racial exclusions from the nineteenth century liberal-

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<sup>4</sup> When APRA finally came to power in the 1980s, it encountered a profound economic crisis and a civil war situation imposed by the Shining Path guerillas (one of the most murderous groups ever to emerge in the region). This situation of crisis, added to the corruption and ineptitude of its own cadres, squandered APRA's opportunity to become a nation making movement.

oligarchic period, while nationalism in Mexico and Argentina shifted towards more inclusive and homogenizing ideas about the nation.

Popular nationalism was in fact quite successful in creating national identities. In Mexico and Argentina, popular national ideologies from the first half of the twentieth century were gradually translated into cultural scripts.. In Mexico, the ideology of *mestizaje* is deeply engrained in popular culture and has become a common frame of reference.. In Argentina, the success of assimilationist nation-making can be glanced in a political event that took place in the early nineties. At that point, the recently inaugurated administration of president Carlos Menem, the son of Syrian immigrants and then leader of the Peronist Party was threatened by a military rebellion lead by Col. Mohammed Ali Seineldin, the son of Lebanese Druze immigrants and leader of a ultra right wing, nationalist, and catholic fraction of the army. Fortunately the coup was averted and democracy was consolidated, for our purpose however, the important aspect of the event is that nobody paid any attention to the origin or ethnicity of the two main actors of the drama.

Peru also provides in this aspect an interesting exception again. Even in the absence of an inclusive national ideology, the social changes brought by modernization, mainly through urban migration and mass education, fostered a de facto popular discourse of Peru as a mestizo nation. Indeed, at the beginning of the 1990s the son of Japanese immigrants Alberto Fujimori was elected with massive popular support due, in part, to the fact that he was seen by the mestizo masses as “on of us” in opposition to the white elite that backed writer turned politician Mario Vargas Llosa. Moreover, the current Peruvian president used his indigenous origin as a badge of honor in his electoral campaign and was inaugurated in Cuzco, the historical Inca capital, rather than Lima. Yet, in popular discourse *mestizaje* has two very different meanings. On the one hand, it means abandoning idean identity and

culture and adopting modern Western culture—the old project of nineteenth century elite. On the other hand, there is a different, subaltern discourse of mestizaje that see mestizos as people who abandoned the status of indians—understood as rural, poor, and backward—but are attached to and proud of indigenous identity (de la Cadena 2000).

This review of three Latin American cases illustrates that the history of nationalism in Latin America is one of a struggle by subordinate groups to be included in the national community and to renegotiate the criteria for national membership. The civic nationalisms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century conceived only the political and economic elites as part of the nation. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw demands for inclusion and attempts to redraw boundaries of national communities that led to the incorporation of subaltern groups in some Latin American countries. In Mexico this process took the form of mestizaje; in Argentina it took the form of populism. By contrast, more inclusive and homogenizing forms of nationalism never gained political significance as a state ideology in Peru, with the exception of a brief and failed experiment constituting a mestizo-nation during the regime of Velazco Alvarado from 1968 until 1975. Yet, even in Peru, the maelstrom of modernization led to the adoption of mestizo nationalism as a cultural script.

## **The Differentialist Turn: Contemporary Challenges to Nationalisms and its broader Implications**

The contemporary period witnesses a new challenge to the definition of the nation; a challenge mounted by the excluded sectors of inclusionary projects, such as mestizaje or populism. In Mexico, the 1970s and 1980s saw increased mobilization of the indigenous population, who maintained their cultural

distinctiveness for inclusion in the Mexican nation. Critical intellectuals and indigenous political leaders challenged the ideology of mestizaje. In 1994, a change in the constitution recognized Mexico as a pluricultural nation. The Zapatistas, as the most prominent contemporary force to pursue this strategy of indigenous inclusion in the national community, represent themselves as both, successors of revolutionary ideals, and therefore part of the mestizo nation, and as an Indian population with a distinct cultural identity (Mattiace 1997: 41). Indigenous movements in Bolivia, Guatemala, and Ecuador also challenge existing definitions of the nation. To these we can add the movement for recognition of Bolivian immigrants in Argentina (Grimson 2000). Peru is again an exception in this context. Yet, even without a full-blown indigenous movement in Peru, indigenous people in the Andean highlands demand full participation as citizens in polity and national community, while retaining the right to be culturally distinct (Garcia, forthcoming). In Argentina, the end of populist hegemony brought back a liberal discourse. Membership in the national community is imagined on the basis individual citizen rights, rather than corporatist rights as workers. A highly marginalizing socioeconomic model is accompanied by a strong xenophobic discourse that blames immigrants for the nation's social problems. Yet, the advent of liberalism brought also a new discourse sense of minority rights. Argentina has legislated antidiscriminatory laws and created a national institute against discrimination. Overall, the region is seeing a new wave of demands for the renegotiation of the terms of inclusion in the nation. This process is undergoing and it is too early yet to know its results. What we know for sure is that Latin American nations are changing again through the challenge posed by population sectors excluded from the national imagined community.

The story we told is in part a local tale. It is the story of the failure and of partial success of Latin American states to include the populations living within their boundaries in their symbolic national orders.

Yet, as we argued at the beginning, we believe that the Latin American case have an intrinsic value to understand sociological theories of nationalism. Nations have been imagined by theorists looking at the European experience as homogenous and stable. Yet, the changing and unstable character of Latin American nations—and nations in other parts of the World System periphery are not deviations to the norm, but are the norm itself.

We believe that the history of Latin American nation-formation epitomizes the problems of nation-formation all over the world. In the United States, the construction of a national community is the story of the struggle for inclusion of racial minorities. Similarly, in Europe, the history of nation-formation is marked by the repression of regional nationalisms, the exclusion of the colonial other, as seen in the exclusion of migrants from the former colonies (Gilroy 1987) and the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism. Presently, the United States and Europe deal with challenges posed by international mass migration to the definition of boundaries of the national community. In that sense, the problems of Latin American nationalisms are more central to our understanding of theories of nationalism than the relative stability of nationalisms in Europe, a stability under challenge these days. In the current globalized world, the boundaries of nations are and will be challenged constantly. What we need to understand better is not whether nations are a modern construct or have ethnic origins, or whether nations are constructed along civic or ethnic principles, but the contested and changing character of nations and the peculiar forces that press for distinct solutions in the quest for national inclusion.

The solution to the issues raised by the limits of inclusion into national communities is not simple. As we demonstrated, emphasis on universalism can have profoundly marginalizing results. The particular experiences and voices of subaltern groups need a place within the nation. Yet, as Brubaker (2001) argues, the emphasis of particularism and group rights can also be use for the purpose of exclusion. A

focus on citizenship and universal rights should be part of any democratic national project as should be the recognition of cultural difference and the demands of subaltern groups. Perhaps all we can aspire towards is to recognize the unfinished character of national communities and demand that its implicit openness become recognized—a way to create institutional spaces for the deliberation of the codes of membership and belonging that constitute a national community.

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