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Abstract. This essay is aimed to outline, from an historiographical standpoint, the chief aspects and consequences sprung out from the crucial historical transition from Sovietism to post-Sovietism, occurred mainly in certain Eastern countries of Europe, near Russian area, just due to such an epochal historical event which has so marked deeply and specifically either society and politics, in such a manner that a typical, featuring phenomenology – which we might call *post-Sovietism phenomenology*, interesting, above all, history, politics and sociology – is, for instance, identifiable through the historiographical investigation of the data retraceable from the various contributions just recollected in *The Ideology and Politics Journal*, a privileged place of debate where many international scholars have just analysed this crucial historical transition, and exposed their related ideas and suggestions. We restrict our study highlighting certain aspects of this phenomenology to put into evidence another historical phenomenology – that of recursions in the past – starting just from this specific context, from which it is then possible to identify typical elements which may be considered as constants of similar historical events, like *ethnicity* in case of secession or separation movements.

The many contributions published until now in *The Ideology and Politics Journal* offer, if analyzed historiographically, precious and unique data and information about a singular and crucial historical event which has occurred in the 20th-century, that related to the passage from Sovietism to post-Sovietism. All that rich and variegated amount of information, which may be pulled out from these contributions, shall enable us to identify main features characterizing, above all from the sociology and political sciences viewpoint, this fact whose specificity and singularity, just as an historical event, may justify the use of an appropriate and denoting term such as *phenomenology of post-Sovietism*, whose next historical-critical analysis may provide, on its turn, further suggestions from the historical and foundational standpoint (Rabkin & Minakov 2018, Editors' Foreword).

The historical event into question, is the well-known collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, with its many and deep consequences with, above all, the return to the own previous history for each state of the past union. Particularly important is, among other, try to understand how, along this historical process, cultures and ideologies have changed. In this regard, Mikhail Minakov (2013, pp. 1-2) first states that: «Hegel's idea that "Reason is the Sovereign of the World; [... and] the history of the world therefore, presents us with a rational process" has been denied many times by philosophers and politicians in the 19th-21st centuries – and the post-Soviet political reality takes an active part in this denial», hence «Hegel called for "a belief… a desire, a trust" in the fact that there is Reason in the history of the world. The post-Soviet history provides us with a rare constellation of obstacles that test such a trust». Along the same line of thought, is also placeable the idea of Meir Amor according to which the basis of rationality is, in fact, irrational[1] (Amor, 2018).

Yevgenia Sarapina (2013), in particular, argues on the competition between alternative versions of collective memory in Kiev after Soviet Union collapse, observing Kiev's urban space as such is the setting for the constant (re)production of its past through a system of mythologems. Along this line, the paper of Mariëlle Wijermars (2015) analyses the emergence of either the political myth of Pëtr Stolypin (1862-1911) with its recent institutionalization as an exemplary pattern for contemporary

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[1] See, above all, Section 2. Furthermore, the relevance of Amor's paper also relies in having put a notable relationship between demodernization and the increasing of human rights abuses.

Russian politics (and also put into a parallel comparison with the destalinization processes[2]), and the myth of "Time of Troubles", both never recalled or invoked during either Soviet Union period or in the post-Soviet one, but rather recently re-actualized and institutionalized, above all the first, in Putin's regime which seems to be much similar to Stolypin's politics. Finally, (Kutuev & Choliy, 2018) analyze modernization/de-modernization phenomena[3] occurring in the instable post-Leninist societies which, in comparison with the Western ones, show, in some of its respects, recursions in the past political regimes, as for instance manifested in mobilization processes[4].

These basic historical-critical considerations, made by renowned scholars who have studied in-depth the post-Soviet situation, also confirm the historiographical reflections by Luciano Canfora (2018, Chps. 7, 11) on the possible nature of history and its route, just seen, through a meaningful geometrical metaphor, as a kind of ''ascending spiral around a cylinder'' – i.e., an helix – that cyclically, but never at the same level, may reach a certain historical setting 'homologically' similar (but never identical[5], because placed at another different level on the cylinder) to a past setting approximately localized along the same vertical line relying on the cylinder surface (and parallel to the cylinder's axis). In this regard, Canfora just quotes, as an instance of the movement of history like an helix, the millenarian Russian history, hence arguing on the singular nature and the atypical structure of revolutions and their dependence on the history of the country where they took place[6]. Canfora, on the basis of a wide and rich historiographical analysis, also points out the inevitability of revolutions as perennial (hence, recurrent) historical events (although occurring with different manifestation forms), as due basically to the inextinguishability of human conflict.

The dissolution of Soviet Union of 1991, mainly due to the drastic economic failure for the impact of Michail Gorbačëv's reforms – which have given, for the first time in the history of Russia, public institutions aimed to social-democratic principles – against the previous centralization of Stalinian system[7], was however seen as the beginning of a new period of democracy and freedom, as well as

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[2] After which, Soviet system lost its typical terroristic and totalitarian features, to evolve in an heavily authoritarian and illiberal system (Galli 2011, Parte V, Cap. XIII, Sez. II, § 10.1).

[3] The first comprehensive reference on the reciprocal comparison of these phenomena is (Rabkin & Minakov, 2018), to which we refer for a deeper understanding of them. See, above all, the contributions of Rabkin (2018) and Minakov (2018) to this first, remarkable collective study on the new socio-political phenomenon of demodernization.

[4] Some studies have highlighted close relationships between the rising of mobilization and a contemporary increasing of national identity feeling (Herbst, 1990). Also, the after Soviet empire disintegration has seen a return to typical traits of traditional Russian culture and its symbolisms (Tullio-Altan 1995, Cap. 7, § 2), instead to look at the patterns of other countries not revolving around Soviet area.

[5] This is also in agreement with the remarkable Claude Lévi-Strauss' statement according to which any historical event is always structurally characterized by the combination of the three main aspects, namely morphological, functional and contextual, so two historical events are identical if and only if they are such from the morphological, functional and contextual standpoint, otherwise they are not (Cardini & Liberti 2019, p. 36).

[6] In this regard, even first Bolsheviks who reached power in 1917, recovered czarist bureaucracy to govern the wide and complex Russian realm (Tullio-Altan 1995, Cap. 7, § 2).

[7] The central planning system introduced by Stalin in 1930s, mainly based on either the Leninist party and a centralized planned economy, was the most massive and important intellectual challenge to capitalism, so this socio-economic-political pattern was seen, by Western countries, with interest and apprehension as it was very able to transform Russia from an impoverished, divided and marginal state, as it was in 1917, in one of the stronger and competitive state of the world, which could face United States and other notable Western countries, like Germany, up to many decades of post-war period, till to become a model of socialism to be taken, as a political system, by many other countries all around the world. In the 1950s, the world was so subdivided into the capitalistic part, the socialistic part and the remaining one (so-called, ''third world''). The socialistic model exerted a great appeal also for those countries which yet rejected Stalin's methods, like India, since it was seen as an efficient economic system to be adopted by those countries which just came out from a long period of colonialism, to which warranted a rapid economic growth and an reinforcement of the weak political system left from previous colonizers. So, socialism wasn't an utopia as usually deemed by Western economists and apparently (if one ignores the wide lacking of information on the real situation) it seemed a consistent and strong

the early steps of capitalism in Russia, on the basis of the economic models of many European states. But, this very fast passage from a fully centralized power of communist government of Soviet Union to a net decentralized political system with capitalistic tendencies, led to a radical, strong and deep crisis of Russia and post-Soviet countries, never seen before. Then, those states that have not been able to quickly change the old Soviet communist settlement[8] into a new democratic and liberalistic political system, have become dictatorships (Bellezza 2017, § 1; Schaefer 2017, § 9).

Those post-Soviet countries which have anyhow undertaken a way of reforms going beyond the old communist regime, often following European models, have had a better social-economic setting with respect to the other post-Soviet countries that have not adopted any new reform, with the result to return implicitly to social-economic forms of the old communist regime mainly having oligarchic nature, placing their union between a confederation and a community, namely the *Community of Independent States* (CIS), to be meant as a kind of (Russian) Commonwealth (Mammarella 2000, Capp. XXI, XXIII). At the same time, with the collapse of Soviet Union, all these constituent countries, which had either an own nationalistic identity and a Soviet one[9], inside this union, now have to face the further problem to build up a new, single and stronger national identity not longer included into the Soviet one as in the past; even Russians asked which identity they had (Bellezza 2017, §§ 2, 3).

But, during the post-Soviet period, mainly led by Boris El'cin and his closer collaborators after Gorbačёv's period, there were many attempts to establish relationships and links with Occidental states, until up well-known Chechnya's affaire which saw Russia involved into an hard and bloodily conflict – often due to pretentious motifs – with Chechnya, whose fates and circumstances were mainly decided by the new Russian prime minister Vladimir Putin, just chose by El'cin's family in the late 1990s. Gradually, Putin, the new muscovite "czar" or better another *bàtjuška*[10], will lead fastly Russia to a new institutional setting, characterized by a return to a centralization of the

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system, but rigidly refractory toward economic reforms on the central economic planning, whose first proponent, in Russia, was just Gorbačёv since 1980s, then expulsed in 1991, with the consequent collapse of Soviet Union and the apparent victory of capitalism. Many scholars suppose that just Gorbačёv's reforms were the main causes of the collapse of Soviet system, besides the next political conflicts of 1991-92 between Gorbačёv himself and Boris El'cin (Rutland 2019, pp. 203-7, 223-25).

[8] Based upon an economic system centrally planned by the Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU), which drew its roots from Marx's theory as elaborated on the basis of centralized planning of German economy of the first two decades of 20th century, but not adequately reformed by Lenin in 1921 with the foundation of the New Economic Policy (NEP) which, notwithstanding some weak openness toward free market yet controlled by central power (by Lenin himself and Nikolaj Bucharin), gotten further worsen with Stalinian reforms of 1928 thank to which CPSU got full power either economic and political aimed to centralize all the economic incomes (due to the hard work of the wide Russian population) to heavy industry and military defence, in such a way that SSSR became, at the end of 1930s, the second economic power of the world, but with a population very needy. This led necessarily to make decentralization reforms either at social and political level after Stalin's death, which were partly done by either Nikita Chruščёv (1958-64) and Leonid Brežnev (1965-82), thank to whom Russians quality of life gradually improved, but without changing the now marked fate of SSSR whose logic of economic centralization was irreconcilable with logic of free market. This situation didn't change with Michail Gorbačёv (1985-91) who, unfortunately, inherited an already unchangeable situation that himself yet tried to save with liberal reforms but turned toward socio-political context rather than the economic one, which was reformed only around the end of 1980s. However, any liberal reform was destined to the failure just for the structure of Soviet system itself, fully centralized into the CPSU, as effectively taken place after Gorbačёv's political reforms, with that plethora of inefficient economic reforms proposed by every part but inconsistent with the real situation in which Russia stayed with its decennial centralization system which therefore has not been a really counterpart of capitalism but rather revealed to be a simple political-economic expedient to maintain power for the time of a few generations (Rutland 2019, pp. 207-25; Roncaglia 2019, Cap. 9, § 8).

[9] Although, the Soviet one was the predominant identity.

[10] See, for instance, (Piretto, 2018).

powers[11], a pre-eminence of the Russian state (whatever ideological trend it has had in the past) coincident with Russian nation, carried out with the hegemonization of the nation, also making appeal to old Stalin methods (Corni 2017, § 4). Just at the beginnings of the year 2000, El'cin led Putin as his successor, winning easily the presidential elections also thanks to the oligarchs of El'cin's family. Soon, Putin filled that deep emptiness of law regulations of post-Soviet transition, covering almost all the institutional contexts of Russia and its wide need of reforms after the collapse of Soviet Union (Bellezza 2017, §§ 3, 4).

Putin immediately re-established energetic sector, re-nationalizing – often through Machiavellian methods, for his own profit – the many Russian energetic companies which have fallen in the hands of El'cin's family and friends (i.e., the so-called "oligarchs"), hence acquired the control of all the possible communication channels. He directly decided to whom assign public commitments and procurements. Furthermore, he reformed, to his own gain, electoral law in such a manner that political oppositions had many difficulties to operate in parliament, instituting an his own party supported by many youth associations directly financed by him, to give a surreptitious image of democratic sustainment just by the younger supporters. In a few words, Putin was restoring the old autocratic and centralized power that characterized, for many centuries, Russia and its satellite states[12], so hindering manifestly those early steps of post-Soviet republics toward democratic settlements, putting into action that internal "competitive authoritarianism" which featured almost all the political life of these states which initially, soon after the collapse of Soviet Union, were aimed to establish a "multivectoral" politics (i.e., turned toward many different Occidental states, not only with United States) (Bellezza 2017, § 4; Minakov 2018, pp. 254-258).

So, with Putin and his new energetic politics which made Russia an independent and emancipated national state after SSSR collapse, a revitalization of the old Eurasian ideology, born in the czarist period, gradually rises together another ideological thought called *russkij mir* which claims an own geopolitical area for the Russia[13]. In such a way, Russia preferred to establish strong relations with historical opponents to USA, like Iran and China, and, in general, trying to get a relevant role in the Asiatic region. At the same time, Putin's regime has tried, so to speak, to "culturally" conquest, in a kind of new colonialism, just the ex-soviet states with any sort of publications, media and other information means, exclusively working in Russian language, with the main aim to reunifying the previous post-soviet space justified with the pretext based on the alleged oblige, by the Russia, to take care of all the ethnical minorities having a some Russian origin. All that, to satisfy Putin's aim consisting in ever more seclude Russia and ex-Soviet regions[14] from either European Union and United States, trying to lead anyhow to himself all the governments of post-Soviet Union (Bellezza 2017, § 4).

This neo-colonial politics of Putin regime has been based, until a few days ago, on strategic tactics suitably finalized to this aim, as the increasingly energetic dependence of Europe upon rich Russian

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[11] Hence, a real recursion in the past, characterized, as is well-known, by the Stalinian centralization of power (into the CPSU).

[12] Like in czarist Russia (Mammarella 2000, Cap. XXI, p. 565).

[13] And, this is coherent with what has been just said above, in the first part of this paper, as well as largely witnessed by the many other contributions of *The Ideology and Politics Journal*, to which we refer for a deeper historical analysis of polyhedral post-Sovietism.

[14] And, in this regard, very emblematic have been the cases of the interference of Russia in Ukraine and Georgia where, differently from other ex-Soviet states, the cultural influences of Europe and USA have been stronger toward liberal and democratic tendencies, and that, on the other hand, have been seen by Russia as a serious danger for the expansionist new tendencies of the Russia in re-establishing its old hegemonic aim of overall control in all the Russian area (Bellezza 2017, § 5).

stocks and the gradual disengaging of Russia from the historical 1987 INF Treaty, already formally suspended first by USA president Donald Trump[15] on February 1, 2019, to which Russia replied the following day in the same manner. So, Putin has touted, in all ex-Soviet states, a kind of "sovereign democracy" under the dependence on Russian government, to hinder as well as destabilizing all the possible "democratic revolutions" – aimed to bring in democratic reforms (for politics) and liberal practices (for economy), under the instance of European and USA patterns – as occurred in Ukraine and Georgia, in such a manner to restore the old Russian hegemony in its anti-Western form. In this way, Russia (and its more faithful states, like Belarus, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan) have rejected any socio-political and economical model of Europe and USA, trying instead to restore old forms of authoritarian organizations of politics and economy set against Occidental models but, at the same time, devoid of any form of ancient socialistic ideology of Sovietism, but mainly centred on a kind of geopolitical rivalry, towards Western realm, which may be seen as beginning of a new social and cultural development route not yet in optimal equilibrium conditions (Bellezza 2017, § 5).

Therefore, what might turned to be quite interesting from this perspective, is try to descry, as far as is possible, which phenomena of recursions in the past could take place along this new development direction undertaken by Russia and its geopolitical orbit of action aimed to historically restore, yet in a not well-known fashion, ancient or past epochs and their moments, in critical comparison with the situation of other countries where this is licit to do. At the present, taking into account what has been said in the first part of this paper, it seems that the current government setting has reactivated (or re-enacted) many aspects of pre-Soviet politics, to be precise, of Russian Empire which hold for almost three centuries. But, notwithstanding the brief Leninist post-revolutionary period for Russian history with the foundation of the Russian Socialistic Republic then converged to Soviet Union in 1922, the next Stalin period was characterized by a regime type settlement turned ever more to give pre-eminence – with respect to abroad – to forms of nationalism, so gradually avoiding any contact with Western world (Natalizi 2017, §§ 1-13).

The post-Stalin setting, even if mainly based on the power of communist party and its *Presidium*, was also aimed – initially – by a decentralization tendency with respect to the strong, net and rigid centralization of Stalin regime, mainly due to the extreme indigence condition in which population laid. To this end, the prime secretary of communist party, Nikita Chruščёv, who organized the first post-Stalin agrarian reform, gradually gained power until to become govern leader, re-establishing the relationships with Western world, so giving an optimistic perspective for the Russia, after the obscure years of Stalin period which was heavily criticized, since 1950s. So, the many dark sides of Stalin regime were clearly denounced, but this led the opponents of Chruščёv to try to destitute him, without sorts. Hence, Chruščёv was able to become either prime secretary of communist party and govern head, events which were seen as a return to that "cult of personality" that characterized the Stalin period (as well as, obviously, the czarist epoch), but, notwithstanding that, he failed in facing the comparison – above all, at the economic level – with other countries, among which are Western ones (Natalizi 2017, §§ 13, 14).

With the destitution of Chruščёv and his replacement with Leonid Brežnev, around 1960s, the two charges of prime secretary of communist party and head of govern, brought by a unique person until Chruščёv, were separated and assigned to different persons. Furthermore, the political program was,

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[15] Who, as a main counterpart, is responding to Putin nationalistic pushes, in almost perfect similar fashion. On the other hand, also in many European Union states there are more or less strong tendencies to nationalistic ideologies, as clearly pointed out in (Canfora, 2018) and references therein.

then, turned towards the welfare of Russian population, which demanded economic and civil well-being as well as an improvement of the general life conditions. But, the corresponding consumerism increasing, as hoped together a technical-scientific innovation, wasn't supported adequately by a suitable economic program, whence Brežnev's government, in 1970s, engaged with a crisis which was also due to both the pushes of government nationalistic autonomies and the centralization of the control of economy but relegated to each state member of the Soviet Union, which went to favourite local organizations and political elites. Then, the inexperienced in foreign politics compromised the relations with Western nations and USA, leading Russia to increase its military potential and re-opening mobilization processes but, at the same time, neglecting socio-economical context which will rapidly lead, after the death of Brežnev, to an unavoidable collapse of Soviet Union, then officially decreed by Michail Gorbačëv (Natalizi 2017, §§ 14-19).

For what has been said above, notwithstanding Gorbačëv reforms and the opening toward Western countries, Russia and the ex-Soviet states have not been very able to alienate themselves of the past political schemes centred around Soviet system and its ideologies (mainly based on Leninist ideas) which hindered the introduction of an institutional framework similar to that of Western countries and warranting liberal systems and democratic governments that Gorbačëv wished to establish ex-novo, but without success (Bellezza 2017, p. 699). So, post-Soviet settlement was characterized, so to say, by an unaware tendency to remain on past Soviet political schemes and older ones (like in the case of Putin regency), according to an historical phenomenology which sees, whenever these are newly re-evoked, the occurrence of appeals to nationalistic feelings and self-determination, till to discuss, even animatedly, on what is the real ''national identity'' of either Russia and every single ex-Soviet state (Bellezza 2017, §§ 1-3). This may be also compared with the strange social situation which is occurring in many post-Soviet countries, like Ukraine, where the growing of social inequality is leading to a "right-wing" populist derive rather than a "left" political turn (Kiryukhin, 2018).

Therefore, amongst the typical aspects of the history and its phenomenology of Russia and Soviet Union, above all in the witnessing of the authors of *The Ideology and Politics Journal*, it stands out that the question of "national identity" is a recurrent theme occurring in many historical events of this specific history (as well as of many others[16]), having however to do with separation movements of peoples rather than with integration processes. In particular, such a theme has to be involved in secessionist movements and self-determination tendencies[17], a theme which is closely related, from a socio-anthropological standpoint, to the notion of "ethnicity" as connected with the notions of "nationalism" and "national identity". In particular, as witnessed by certain crucial moments of the Russian history (see above) as well as by many other historical instances of secession or separation movements (and the very recent history of the European Union just comprehends many related cases), the references to a presumed ''ethnic identity'' is always recalled or claimed; it has been always involved, in some way, in many of those numerous conflicts that determined the collapse of Soviet Union (Mammarella 2000, Cap. XXI), besides to have been present among the causes of October revolution (Benvenuti 1994, § 2.8). Therefore, it seems quite reasonable to consider "ethnicity" as one of the basic (socio-anthropological) themes of secession or separation movements analysis, hence critically discuss it.

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[16] See, for example, (Sassoon, 2019).
[17] See, above all (Johnson 2006, Ch. 1).

On the other hand, from an historical standpoint, the major challenges of our time just revolve around the need of a identity. The national state, which seemed – apparently – overcome in Europe, becomes quite rigid with respect to the ever more pressing immigration, while in Africa and Middle East we assist at the falling down of those weak and factitious states left in heritage by colonialism. Accordingly, religions come back again, being invoked as a membership/belonging factor stronger than democratic citizenship and civilization. The ideal of a globalized economy, associated with the attempt to export, at any cost, democracy (as meant by ancient Western civilization), is in contrast with the increasing social-economic inequalities and fragmentation of society favoured ever more by the totalizing and levelling neo-capitalistic ideology with respect to which even political classes (of every colour) are impotent and unable to face, lead inevitably to redraw a ''community feeling'' tracing new borders, which are often much more difficult to handle and manage. So, the two founding values of Western civilization, i.e., freedom and democracy, risk to appear void to the new generations which see, every day, that others as many founding values, as equality, brotherhood and justice, are tacitly abandoned so the recalls to pacific coexistence sound hypocrite in a world which felt itself to be threatened and, consequently, the anguish to find and fight certain enemies comes (Barbero 2016, p. IX).

Currently, there is a common idea for which collective identity relies on a commonly shared past as a primary, early basis for a shared system of values and a common membership/belonging sense, so that history has regained importance and consideration just to these ends. But if it is more correct to speak of cultural and social identities, then just history says us that these last should not be meant as immutable data given once and for all but are rather the outcome of a secularly long route from a series of innumerable interlacements, reciprocal conditionings and unthinkable mixing that only an impartial sight may identify and analyze. In particular, these queries are preeminent for European civilization as this is the founding element of the so-called ''global civilization'' which touches all the five continents of the world, and the European civilization is, in turn, the result of the millenary encounters of various peoples and cultures, which have seen Mediterranean basin and European inland always meet together (Barbero 2016, pp. IX-X).

From an anthropological standpoint, *ethnos* is a Greek word which originally means an ensemble of individuals having certain specific features, and that has undergone processes of reification, or *essentialization*, until up to become an almost biological feature of the human beings belonging to the related membership group. Modern anthropology has criticized this trend, which neglected the basic historical-contingent nature of those processes giving rise an ethnical identity which is meant as ontologically eradicated ancestrally or primordially. All that might be considered, from either a socio-anthropological and a socio-psychological standpoint, as prejudicial arguments for justifying in-group vs. out-group conflicts[18], often due to materialistic motifs for the benefit of the own in-group but leading to possible attribution errors (Anolli 2004, Cap. IX, § 1; Bonte & Izard 2009, p. 429; Hogg & Vaughan 2010, Ch. 3; Dei 2016, Cap. 2, § 3, Cap. 14, § 4). On the other hand, there exist close and basic relations between identity and group membership with the related cultural systems (Amerio 1995, Cap. IX; Sciolla 2012, Cap. 4, § 6).

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[18] From a social psychology analysis of these see, for example, (Speltini & Palmonari, 1999), in particular Chapter V for the centripetal and centrifugal forces acting on social groups, as well as (Voci, 2003), (Catellani 2011, Cap. IV) and (Palmonari et al., 2012).

From a sociological standpoint, then, it is possible to distinguish basically two identities, namely a *personal identity* and a *collective identity*[19]: the former is related to the singularity of each individual in her or his relationships with others, so distinguishing, on the one hand, between self and others, and, on the other hand, between us and them, while the latter is related to a certain social group considered as distinguished by other social groups. If personal identity is the outcome of a complex process of socialization, collective identity is the result of an as many complex historical process, the modern Western state-nations being an instance of that. Closely related with collective identity is also the so-called *cultural identity* which does not refer to personal identity features (like gender, age, and so forth) but rather to a feeling about a presumed common origin as a social group, whose specificity is claimed inside a wider multiethnic society composed, on the one hand, by immigrates and, on the other hand, by cultural minorities acquired by *absorption process* by past conquests or colonisations. Cultural identity, as a typical distinction form of the type us/them, may undertake, above all as *ethnical identification*, a primary role predominating over the other choices concerning the construction of the own social identity of each individual. An *ethnicity*, meant as strongly rooted in an innate and objective manner, is often chosen as a primary identity dimension which will lead to the formation of other social status constellations of the own identity framework (Sciolla 2012, Cap. 4, § 6).

Ethnicity is an anthropological category studied for various reasons and from different standpoints. The anthropologists have recently put attention to this category in that, being ethnicity a marginal effect of modernization processes closely linked with developments of capitalism and its models of society, it necessarily reappears when demodernization processes take place, also inside capitalistic societies in the presence of ethnic minorities, from which a reconsideration of this category started. Therefore, ethnicity has turned up again, above all inside those alleged modern capitalistic societies, in relation to the internal presence of minorities mainly due to the two above mentioned processes of inclusions (by immigration and absorption). It is a category that, as a cultural pattern, springs out from a historical process (*ethnogenesis*) which will provide a cultural (and not ideological) meaning to an ethnic category through history, so excluding any other hypothesis which considers ethnicity as a category coming from a reification process, so avoiding to look at ethnicity as an objective entity. An ethnic category, as a self-representative configuration, is therefore the outcome of an historical process that takes place in dependence on certain contingencies of the socio-economic-environmental context (Scarduelli, 2000).

Historically, problems with ethnic identity were faced by anthropologists when they studied the situations originated from decolonization and the fights for independence in South-Eastern Asia and Africa, as well as from geopolitical motifs and the autonomist claims of minorities. Even before, the structural-functionalistic trend of anthropology considered ''ethnic identity'' just as the primary reference of membership/belonging, besides a universal and fundamental reality of social life, until reaching essentialization processes. But, already Fredrik Barth (see also what has been said above) showed that ethnic borders were basically established and maintained by group interactions, starting to deconstruct the essentialist concept of ethnicity. This was proved analyzing the conflicts between minorities involved in work exploitation and urban ghettos, which were just characterized by a great presence and use of many, various identity constructions, having an ethnic basis, to cope violence and group conflicts. So, identity is a concept which lost its alleged objective nature to become rather the outcome of a historical process which sees, operating in the contingent field of history, different

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[19] See (Mancini, 2010) for a social psychology enquiry on identity.

causes, reasons and motifs often linked to social group conflicts. Notwithstanding that, the concept of identity still maintains an essentialist nature[20] (Bonte & Izard 2009, p. 429).

At this point, it seems to be needed to make some reference to the so-called *ethnic revival*, a notion which has been introduced and deeply studied by Anthony D. Smith (1981; 1986), also in relation to nationalism, in regard to which he speaks of *ethnic nationalism*. Smith points out the emergence of ethnic revival notwithstanding the occurrence of modernization processes, like those linked to economic liberalism, which predicted the end of past features of primordial societies just like ethnic motifs. In the case of the implosion of Soviet Union, as a main consequence of the political and economic defeat with respect to NATO states, we look at the failure of Stalinian project of military and ideological imposition of Russian pan-Slavism to the world which was based on the French principle of social and cultural assimilation of the various ethnic minorities ruled by a politics whose tools were settled for taking into account this variegation of ethnicity, so that Russian government was made by many elements drew from the government of each ''ethnicity'' (with exception of the Polish one, refractory, for its strong nationalistic aim, to each type of imposition of central power). Furthermore, since 19th-century, European movements of political independence of the new national identities were known to ethnic minorities subdued to czarist Russia (Tullio-Altan 1995, Cap. 7, § 2).

The disaggregation of SSSR gave rise the question of reclaiming a specific national identity for the new states[21], each of which was earlier subsumed by the wider Soviet identity; this question turned out to be much more important than other social issues, and each ex-Soviet state tried to find, in the best way, its own national identity also making reference to what Sovietism had attributed to it. Just after the collapse of Soviet Union, an heated political and cultural debate on what meaning had to be assigned to the adjective "Russian", identifying at least, six different ways to intend this term (Bellezza 2017, § 3). Anyway, after this collapse, the simple deletion of the past operated in the first phase of post-communism, has not been enough to build up a shared and accepted reflection on the own recent past, a reflection which however reduced to an animated debate on the identity and to a consequent searching for a strong identity memory making always reference to what happened in the ex-dominant state, the Soviet Union/Russia, which often influenced negatively this process of rediscovery of the own national identity with the patriotic exaltation of the victory of the 2nd world war seen as a prosecution and ideal sublimation of the great revolution of 1917 (Corni 2017, § 4).

What has been said until now, about Eurasian history regarding Russian period comprised between 19th- and 20th-century, shows and testifies what prominent role[22] plays ethnicity in determining the separation or secession movements[23]. This, because such a notion – i.e., that of *ethnicity* – is closely

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[20] Claude Lévi-Strauss said that identity is a kind of virtual nucleus to which we necessarily refer to explain a great lot of things, although it does not have any objective reality (Barus-Michel et al. 2005, p. 164).

[21] A situation quite similar also interested the born of the new state of Israel after second world war. Indeed, following (Lewin-Epstein & Cohen, 2018), a research-study socio-demographically based has shown that different migration generations commonly preferred a Jewish identity, categorized as a national identity in Israel, rather than a particular ethnic-cultural identity (which would has been more appropriated to the own ethnic origins, e.g., Mizrahim, Moroccan, Ashkenazi, Polish, etc.). This analysis revealed existing a multi-layered structure of ethnic identification, but also that ethnic identities are quite resistant to change; finally, ethnically mixed marriages shown to elude ethnic identities which were yet replaced with national identities. On the persistence of ethnic identity, its genesis, structure and nature, see also (Assmann 1997, Cap. III).

[22] Also used for strategic ends; in this regard, see (Cuche 2006, Cap. 6, § 5).

[23] For instance, after the collapse of Soviet Union, there were no so many difficulties to reunify Eastern Germany with the Western one, after Berlin wall fall, just because of a common ethnic identity of the people of the two Republics.

related to that of *nation*[24] as frequently involved in processes of nationalistic claims of the various ethnicities to determine their *ethnic identity* as basically due to the primordial opposition us/them (*alterity*) which, on its turn, springs out from the comparisons among human groups in some sense different culturally. The identity has to be meant as a continuous, unrestrainable and unavoidable historical process which is always operating in every human being in a context of alterity. In any case, ethnicity is a socio-cultural construct[25] which is based on a set of some common traits, linking together a certain number of peoples, deemed to date back to a presumed common historical origins really re-evoked to justify materialistic aims and economic interests. Basic founding elements of ethnicity are either a common membership sentiment felt as authentic and an historical deep-rooted belief about a mythological origin of such an ethnic sentiment (Fabietti, 1998; 1999; 2004).

The principle of ethnic identity has also concerned the unexpected phenomenon of the collapse of Soviet Union, which was deemed a stable social and state asset that may challenge centuries, after which one attended at the strong re-emergence of ethnic forms of social aggregations which seemed by now extinct and historically overcame, so a re-examination of the category of ethnicity urged to be undertaken by social sciences and humanities. This last task was accomplished either dating back ethnicity to either objective, reified referents (like race, people, country, language, culture, ancestry, and so forth) and subjective entities (like unconscious lived states as well as conscious mythological representations). Accordingly, from this standpoint, ethnic identity has been considered, from time to time, as either an unavoidable and permanent primordial attribute or an historically influenced product culturally codified. Anyway, all these various – and often pairwise contrasting – meanings attributed to this category, have however a common, basic primordial symbolic nucleus which gives meaning and value to it, as previously identified by Anthony D. Smith but without giving further explanations[26]. Just to this end, Carlo Tullio-Altan (1992; 1998) has provided to study the symbolic bases of the category of *ethnos* and its emergence in all those historical forms with which it is or has been involved in aggregation/disaggregation phenomena of humans[27].

Therefore, as the few remarks made above on the phenomenology of post-Sovietism witness, the socio-anthropological category of *ethnos* (or *ethnic identity*) is closely related, or involved, in aggregation/disaggregation phenomena of peoples, like, for example, secession movements. So, an its in-depth and wide study, as that made, for instance, by Carlo Tullio-Altan (1992; 1998), should cast further light on secession movements as well as on the nature and structure of this category. On

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[24] In this regard, see (Fardon, 1987), (Forrest, 2004), especially Chapter 1, and (Richard & MacDonalds, 2016). See also the discussion of the case of nationalism of Baluchi, the first nation without a state of Asia (in the Western zone of Pakistan), which makes reference to presumed early Indo-European origins (Fabietti et al. 2012, Cap. 5, § 5.3).

[25] Functionally quite similar to the so-called *imaginative cultures* of B. Anderson. Some further anthropological studies in Oceania, have revealed a possible use of identity concept as ''custom'' or ''habit'', a life style or moral/ethical value, to invoke in debates on decolonization, political independence, state or national unity, etc. (Bonte & Izard 2009, p. 430).

[26] In (Smith, 2000; 2008), the author points out further the need to come back to the deep historical-cultural rooting of ethnic structures into a given society to understand its framework of nation.

[27] Carlo Tullio-Altan identifies five main irreducible components of the *ethnicity*, or *ethnos*, which are at the basis of the innate sense of identity and membership/belonging of any human being, namely: the *genos*, that is to say, the hereditary and parental relationships; the *logos*, that is to say, the speech (as socio-historical actuation of the human language or langue), early root of the social communication; the *topos*, that is, the territoriality, the symbolic image of the ''motherland''; the *epos*, that is, the history, or the telling of the common mythical and historical origins; the *ethos*, that is, the ''sacralisation'' of social and institutional norms, the ethical values and rules upon which organize society and culture. These basilar components are aggregated together to give rise a unique, solid identity nucleus, and arise from the semiotic symbolization of the concrete reality in which human beings usually live (Inghilleri 2009, Parte I, Cap. 1, § 1.3). Of course, what might be very interesting to pursue is, for example, a further analysis on the nature and origins of these five basilar components of the category of *ethnos*.

the other hand, we have also point out that, although ethnic identity has neither essentialist nature nor objective status, and this is, by now, quite clear to everyone[28], it is a concept which nevertheless is – almost always – involved or invoked each time a social group interaction takes place, so we ask why this eventuality is – almost always – present, elicited and re-enacted by humans when certain social phenomena (like separation or secession movements) take place. All this, besides suggests the opportunity to further investigate the concept of identity and the related ethnic categories whose arbitrary feature is not due to an inefficiency in the real world but rather to their semiotic nature which leads to a psycho-cognitive study of them, hence to ask how they are structured and organized, how they are rooted in religion sphere, in social values and other context of human life, what common elements have with communication structures and to which consciousness level they are placed (Bonte & Izard 2009, p. 430). A possible way to carry on in the study of ethnic identity in searching of its motivations, might come from the history of primitive societies, in that such a category – i.e., the ethnic identity – might date back just to the early origins of human societies, as social psychology states that, much probably, this making always reference to such a socio-cultural category (as we have said above) is due to evolutionary development of human beings, that is, it is a phylogenetic datum (Voci 2003, Cap. 2), so also evolutionary psychology may provide further information. This is besides coherent with what suggests juridical anthropology about possible early origins of organized societies, according to which these last date back to hunting practice, its aims, structure and rules (Sacco 2007, Cap. XII, § 11), also in agreement with what archaeology and anthropology suggest too (Giusti 1994-2002, Vol. III).

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[28] See also (Remotti, 2010; 2012)

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