

Conclusion

1. Summary of the argument

The international conflicts related to identity issues are a contemporary concern of societies around the world. It is only necessary to watch the news for few minutes to be partly aware of the situation of the world population, fighting for resources, ideologies or race, involved in a continuous struggle between different identities. Questions of identity are difficult to answer, especially in the realms of international relations studies. For those reasons, this thesis had the main task of looking for a step toward the answers of national identity problems, approaching the main argument at its very roots: the construction of identity.

While making this study, the difficulty of such a move became a major concern. Existing studies developed on this construction were either focused on other areas of the social sciences, such as gender studies, or were in some way superficial, simplistic or failed to consider the complexities of the subject. For that reason, the thesis had to import a theory previously used and invented for gender studies, and combine it with other ideas such as Benedict Anderson's to create a new theory of performative construction concerned with national identity.

The development of the research and transformation of the theory of performative construction of identity was theoretically difficult but at the end very fruitful for the field of International Relations. Yet the difficulty in understanding the theory in the abstract obliged me to find a practical test for it. The complexity of the theory of performative construction of identity required such test. For that aim, the Japanese case was invaluable for illustrating the validity of a complicated theory and to specify those areas where the theory can be more useful in the discipline of International Relations. This thesis thus

contributes toward an initial stage in attempting to import a theory designed from one discipline to another. It shows that some areas of Butler's theory of performative construction of identity contain promising dimensions for the study of identity topics in International Relations, contested and validated by the Japanese example.

2. Chapters

The structure of this thesis was divided into three areas. The first chapter dealt with theoretical issues, the second with empirical validation and the third with normative considerations. The introduction gave a general scope and understanding of the problem of national identity in the contemporary world and how this would be narrowed down in the present thesis. I explained the circumstances of the problem and the possibility of importing the theory of performative construction of identity created by Judith Butler into the national realm. Doing so made it necessary to clarify the concepts of *nation*, *state* and *nation state* for such an import. I also included a short discussion of previous attempts to do the same transition by academics such as David Campbell and Cynthia Weber, demonstrating that my contribution to the field would attempt to make the transition in a manner that is more complete, fruitful and useful than the previous ones.

Chapter 1 had the task of providing the theoretical groundwork that could inform the rest of the study. The arguments in this chapter attempted to verify my first sub-hypothesis that Butler's theory can be used to explain very well the way in which national identity can be performatively constructed artificially. I therefore outlined the theoretical dimensions of my central hypothesis that national identity can be artificially articulated, transformed and created by the state. I began by presenting the central aspects of Butler's theory of performative construction of identity. Since Butler's theory was originally

designed to map female *individual* identity construction, and since there have been few studies on the transference of the features of individual identity into the area of *national* identity, it was necessary to justify the validity of transferring the theory to the realm of national identity. I provided several arguments to show that such a move is theoretically plausible.

I also claimed that applying Butler's theory to this topic was not only theoretically possible, but fruitful to better explain the construction of something collective such as national identity. The argument was strengthened by introducing a reading of Benedict Anderson's views on 'imagined communities', concentrating on his notion of 'nationness' to make Butler's theory more complete in our topic. This theoretical frame, provided the initial tools to enhance a deeper understanding of the process of national identity construction which could hypothetically be carried forward to any empirical case.

Chapter 2 had the task of applying the contributions of Butler and Anderson's theoretical construction to an empirical case of national identity construction. I made a conscious attempt to reduce the theory to its most central components in order to test them against a particular case in a way that was feasible in a study of this length. This helped to illustrate the usefulness of a complicated theory by breaking it down into its most fundamental elements. It also helped to specify those areas where the theory can be most useful to our discipline. This is particularly important in the initial stages of attempting to show that importing a theory designed from one discipline to another is not only possible, but also advantageous. For that reason the central argument of chapter 2 was the application of the previously delimited themes of the theory to explain the artificial nature of Japanese national identity construction in practice. By the use of particular historical examples, I argued that Butler's and Anderson's theoretical contributions can help us to do so in a

particularly integrated and illuminating way which reinforces the verification of my first sub-hypothesis.

I also showed how Japanese national identity has been artificially constructed and manipulated to create the sense of belonging, nationness and the nation state itself. All the evidence and arguments I made pointed toward the conclusion that the Japanese nation state and its unity *has* been artificially created by the state in the very way that the theory maintains. This verifies the second sub-hypothesis this thesis proposed and also forms one of the arguments needed to verify empirically the central hypothesis that national identity can be articulated, transformed and created artificially by the state through the existence of social norms and institutions.

Chapter 3 had the main aim of analyzing the theory developed by combining Judith Butler and Benedict Anderson's work in a different way than the previous chapters. It went further than the theoretical and practical validity of national identity construction into a judgment of value in the use of this process. Even while Butler's theory might be able to explain empirical processes or state policies, its scope would be restricted if those processes or policies were ultimately unsuccessful in achieving their desired objectives. I therefore talked about the benefits and disadvantages of the construction of national identity by means of performativity in the Japanese case. Furthermore, I argued that since the state project of identity construction began in Japan, the outcomes have been generally very positive. This view was supported by some contemporary Japanese examples of the positive outcomes and how the state has attempted to ameliorate any negative effects of artificial identity construction.

Chapter three also helped to reinforce the point that this thesis is not necessarily intended to promote the use of performative identity construction. It is rather to emphasize

that the artificial construction of national identity via performativity is an empirical reality. It is something that is happening and has happened for many years. I concluded here, following Butler and others, that while academics might not be able to change the fact that artificial national identity construction is happening, we should at the very least have the task of spreading awareness that it is occurring. Indeed, the need to be aware of such a reality is paramount if, as Butler argues, adequate political and social representation rests on becoming aware of the facets of our identity and how they are constructed through repetition.

3. *General conclusions*

Implications of the theory

The theory of performative construction of identity gives to the discipline of International Relations a new opportunity for analyzing the construction of national identity from a perspective that is different from those used currently. While two scholars have attempted to use Butler's theory in the political realm, this study has attempted to extend the scope of the theory within the discipline to the social realm and, to my knowledge, is to date the only attempt to apply Butler's work to the study of national identity construction in a systematic way.

Clearly the scope of this thesis has limited the extent to which I could do so. I do not claim that the single case study offered here is conclusive or that my description of Butler's theory is as deep as it could be in a longer study. Nevertheless, what I have tried to do is to give some fairly coherent arguments attempting to show that first, the theory is worthy of attention from scholars of international relations and second, that more work can and ought to be done in reformulating and verifying a version of the theory that could

become a very useful alternative perspective within the discipline. At the very least I hope to have shown that the theoretical links between Butler's subject matter and national identity make it possible to apply such studies more widely. In this study, the wider application required a complementary use of the ideas of nationness and national identity.

Benefits to international relations

I have argued that this thesis is beneficial to international relations studies, mostly because it can give us new tools to systematize and enhance our understanding of nationness at its roots and the contemporary problems related to it. I have also attempted to work through a deeper conceptualization of 'nation', 'state' and 'nation state'. This was achieved by confronting rather than evading the complexity of the nation state and by developing a definition of it within the context of identity studies.

4. *Specific conclusions*

I have shown that the theory of performative construction of identity has many areas in which it can be useful for the study of national identity in international relations. In this way, my first sub-hypothesis that Butler's theory as I have presented it here can and ought to be more fully imported into our discipline and developed further in this area should be verified. This argument, I think, is made more persuasive by adding some important concepts to her theory such as that of nationness, although this is certainly not the only relevant concept that could be used. Perhaps one of the most important conclusions I have arrived at is that much more work on the topic of performativity needs to be done in order to extend this study and to work out its implications more fully.

Japan

Japan was a fruitful example to test and validate the theory of performative construction of identity. The historical examples given during the thesis made clear that Japan *is* a case of performative construction of national identity (sub-hypothesis two). Initially, Japan was chosen for being so successful in the process of identity construction, given that the contemporary Japanese consider themselves as a homogenous ethnic group and many scholars tend to give it as an example of homogeneity. Butler's theory demonstrates that such homogeneity is based on a fiction, but it is a fiction that has had strong consequences for both the lives of the people and the policies of the state of Japan and for the theories we use to explain national identity formation.

While the process of performative identity construction used by the state has disadvantages such as exclusion of minorities, the empirical case demonstrated that such disadvantages can be (and are being) overcome through a process of re-inclusion once the unified national identity has been built. This recognition that re-inclusion should be attempted is just one particular area that future studies could use to enhance our understanding of what national identity is and how it is formed. For it is here that the empirical case shows that ethnic oppression, exclusion, unrest, conflict or out-and-out war are not necessarily the only solutions for states which contain multi ethnic communities. It also shows that artificial state projects of national identity construction do not always have to lead to horrifying ideas of fascist social 'conditioning' or to totalitarian state practices. It is clear from the Okinawan and Ainu experience that the Japanese state has not always got it right and their mistakes have produced some casualties. However, what is most heartening is that now the state has recognized this exclusion, attempts at re-inclusion are being made to address the problem at both the political and the social level.

Finally, it is clear that questions of identity and the answers we provide for them are fundamentally related to the study of International Relations in our days and, in particular, to the study of the contemporary relation between the nation and the state. To return to the quotation from Connolly included at the beginning of this study, this thesis has shown that ‘the claim to a natural or true identity’ is indeed ‘an exaggeration’, at least in the case of Japan. Yet Connolly’s ‘drive to identity’ can be approached from perspectives that, while not natural, are still very meaningful to the individual and beneficial to the nation state. This seems to have been so in the case of Japan. Perhaps it can also be so elsewhere.