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Security, ethnicity, nationalism

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ABSTRACT. Using Slavic examples, the article looks at the nationalism/security nexus present today between the birth of ethnicities (early middle ages) and the birth of nationalism (eighteenth century). I discuss how Slavic ethnicity emerged in Greeks and Roman security thinking. Others were classified in terms of *ethnoi* and were then interpellated into this self-understanding. If ethnicity is an identity for the Other, then nationalism is an identity for the self. It becomes a security concern not to order the Other polity's identity, as did the Byzantines, but to see to it that groups that may threaten your own nationalism – minorities, imperial subjects – cannot embrace nationalism. The policy of denying nationhood to minorities must be understood amongst other things as security policy. The organic understanding of the nation as young and vital demonstrates a third interstice between security and nationalism. If the young and vital nation is to grow and expand at the expense of the old and tired, then the polity that represents itself as a young and vital nation is by dint of that representation alone a security threat against those that they represent as old and tired. Finally, I discuss how this theme is played out in today's Russia

KEYWORDS: antiquity, ethnicity, Rome, Russia

Introduction

Security and nationalism seem to be particularly intertwined in two cases. First, nationalism may increase what Ibn Khaldoun referred to as *assabiya* or the action capacity of polities, by aligning thinking about identity and hence diminishing transaction costs related to collective action. Secondly, in polities which experience problems of legitimacy, for example, when losing territory or having parts of the population questioning its leadership, the leadership often, but not always, responds by trying to fasten the boundaries between us and them by playing up nationalism. These two empirical phenomena are, however, so thoroughly established in the literature that I see little point in going over them again. In this article, I will rather look at the logics that *underlie* these empirical phenomena, and so I ask: how did these possibilities emerge historically? In order to answer this, the article will take the form of a conceptual analysis of how security and identity – in the forms of ethnicity and nationalism – have related to one another down the centuries. I will begin by discussing how identity, whether ethnic and national identities or any other

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ones, is a relational phenomenon. The relations in question will not necessarily be a security concern – I will produce the empirical example of the American precontact Clovis culture to make this point – but when resources are contested, as they almost always are, they will tend to be. I will then discuss how Greeks used the term *ethnos*, and the Romans the term *gens*, to classify other groups. This classification took place in a security context, for Greeks and Romans did not classify *themselves* as ethnic groups. To be an *ethnos* was by definition to be Other, to be uncivilised. The power of the Romans and their classification scheme was so strong that it had a constitutive effect on the groups so classified. Put differently, the *ethnoi* were interpellated into what became their ethnic identity. This interpellation happened in a context where Romans attempted to secure themselves against the *ethnoi.* As an example of how this works, I offer the case of the early Slavs. I then go on to highlight how, in direct contrast to ethnos, the term 'nation' emerged not as an identity for subaltern Others to adopt, but as an identity for the Self, and for the Self exclusively. According to the national Self, subaltern Others had no business aspiring to national identity. If security concerns spelled the imposing of ethnic identity on barbarians, it spelled the denying of national identity to colonials. In conclusion, I highlight how the organic metaphors that sustain the concept of nation must also by necessity invoke security concerns, for the nation is said to be young, and what is young can only flourish if the old is put paid to.

Identity is relational

Diachronic concept analysis must start with finding a way around a built-in problem. On the one hand, the existence of certain phenomena is functionally guaranteed a transhistorical reality simply by dint of the human condition. Identity is such a phenomenon, for *Homo sapiens* cannot survive without living in groups. Groups have a certain cohesion. The term for group cohesion is identity. On the other hand, however, a phenomenon, say identity, is defined by its relations to other phenomena. Since the constellation of phenomena constantly changes, it is certainly true that only that which has no history can be defined, for history throws up a series of related but different phenomena which may mask themselves under the same name. Identity was not the same when we were living in hunting and gathering bands as when the concept of *ethnos* began to be applied and different again when imperative political identity began to take the form of nationalism. Identity is a transnational phenomenon, but how it manifests socially varies historically.

By the same token, any group needs to protect itself against other groups. The broad concept we use for this is security. However, what a group considers a threat and which resources it thinks should be set aside in what quantity to meet those threats varies historically. The built-in problem is this: how do we generalise about phenomena like identity and security when they vary so much historically?

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My answer to this challenge is a conventional one. I try to think of phenomena in terms of verbs, not nouns, processes, not systems (Goldstein 1999). Phenomena have a narrative quality about them; they are practiced and performed. By that token, ethnicity can be understood as 'collective enaction of socially differentiating signs' (Eriksen 1991: 141), and security as the speech act of declaring something to be a threat to the group's ability to go on going on as before. Security may be defined as the process of considering using and then using large-scale force to deter or eliminate what is seen as a threat to the very fabric of the Self (Wæver 1995). The key point, as established by security scholars over the three last decades, is that this is a social process. Threats and security are socially produced. We cannot, therefore, limit the study of security to 'the study of the threat, use and control of military force' (Walt 1991: 212), for doing so would mean taking the phenomena we are supposed to study for granted, which they are not. On the contrary, they are socially produced by other phenomena, such as ethnicity and nationalism.[1]

Security has been an ever-present concern around the globe for the last couple of millennia. That, however, does not in and of itself make it a transhistorical phenomenon. It is enough to find one point in time and space where the large-scale use of force to deter or eliminate what is seen as a threat (our definition of security) is not in evidence for security not to qualify as a transhistorical phenomenon. At least one such case exists, and so it is not the case that security as defined here is a necessary aspect of the human condition. The best case of a non-securitised situation is, I aver, Turtle Island or precontact American archaeological human cultures from their inception and up to the beginning of the common era (that is, around year 1 AD). The archaeological name is the Clovis culture. Jonathan Haas (1986: 16) sums it up as follows:

> Population densities were relatively low, and there was no significant concentration of people in specific locales. […] in looking for signs of conflict, violence or warfare in this nomadic population, we find that […] there continues to be not a single manifestation in the archaeological record. […T]here are no signs of violence in the skeletal population in terms of broken heads, scalp marks, parry fractures or projectile points embedded in bodies, nor do we find villages or camp-sites being located with an eye to defence or the guarding of territory.

The existence of the Clovis culture is important, for it demonstrates that there is no such thing as one single state of nature, where everybody feared everybody else, or where everybody ran away from everybody else. Security, in the sense of using large-scale force to uphold group identity, is not an imperative dictated by nature, or human nature. We may hold (as I, for one, do) that an *animus dominandi*, a drive to dominate others, is an aspect of human nature on the individual level, but that does not automatically translate into a collective phenomenon that we may call security. Empirically, there are many different 'states of nature', in the sense that small groups, let us call them hunter-gatherer bands, have empirically lived side by side in many different

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ways (Donnelly 2012). Some states are marked by high levels of violence, some are not. The key thing about the Clovis case is that, in that period, in that place, there was little competition over resources. Grass was plentiful, as was megafauna, human groups remained small and fairly egalitarian, and the degree of hierarchy within groups was very low.

As hunting and gathering gave way to more planned ways of managing resources – primarily through the advent of agriculture but also by the development of fishing – the size of groups grew, as did their degree of hierarchy. The concept of polity captures nicely the nature of the groups that now emerged. A polity is a group that has a certain degree of we-ness, a certain ability to muster resources and a certain degree of hierarchy (Ferguson and Mansbach 1996), with 'a certain degree' of resources and hierarchy meaning more than what it was possible to obtain for a hunter-gatherer band.

All this is well known. I mention it simply to build to a point that is not so well known, namely, that when polities arose, they did not arise alone. In the literature on so-called early states, which I think we should rather think of as early polities, it was traditionally stressed how emerging polities were pristine. Mesopotamia, the Inka and so on were thought of as arising in isolation. This is factually incorrect. The emergence of large-scale polities everywhere did not take the form of one polity suddenly sprouting out of nowhere. On the contrary, the typical sequence was that a number of them emerged together, in competition, and this kept on, and I think keeps on, being the case. Think of the cities of Sumer, the chiefdoms of Northern Europe, or the states of sixteenth century Europe. These are what we may call peer-group polities (Renfrew and Cherry 1986). This is important to our topic, for it means that how to uphold the integrity of the polity in the face of other polities has been a challenge from the very first historical emergence of polities, and it keeps on being a problem. Security is a systemic imperative of a peer-group polity world. Empirically, periods of agglomeration of polities – what we may call empire-building – have alternated with periods where peer-group polities dominated (Watson 1992). At no point, however, have such empires been able to root out all other polities. The Roman empire knew of China. The Mongol empire knew of other polities, Christendom amongst them. Since the rise of polities, the world has been a multi-polity place.

The empirical fact that polities have always risen as peer-group polities anchors an understanding of 'we' as different from 'they'. Polities need to order the rest of the world; they need a cosmology, and they need a day-to-day way of classifying stuff. The point of departure for this ordering is the we. What is outside has to be made sense of in some way or the other, and the point of departure for this exercise is how the Self is constituted. It follows that we may anchor the importance of identity to security not only empirically, but also theoretically. We-ness demands otherness. There is no we that is not limned off from others. In poststructural parlance, every identity has a constitutive outside. In the words of Bill Connolly (1991: 61), identity needs difference to be, and it tries to secure itself by turning difference into

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Otherness. Once difference is considered as Otherness, the way is short to seeing Otherness as a threat. In a peer-polity world where resources are considered scarce, then, the fact of group identity is necessarily tied to security.

Scholars have been giving growing attention to what we may call the identity/security nexus over the last decades. In a pioneering study, David Campbell (1992) argued at book's length that the history of the US was one of constant othering, which raised the question of whether difference stood much of a chance in a post-Cold War world. Campbell wrote this as an indictment of the US. He was soon joined by Samuel Huntington (1993), however, who happily essentialised and embraced the othering processes in question. Political implication aside, this move effectively slams the door in the face of empirical research: if we already know what identities are and how they are distributed, there is no reason why we should research these questions.[2] Ole Wæver (1996) added that it does not follow that otherness need to be spatial. To Wæver, the Other may also be a former incarnation of the self. This is a nice supplementary insight: the Others that constitute the Self are territorial, but they may also be temporal.

The making of ethnicity

If the key to understanding the importance of security to identity has to do with how we come to see the Other as a threat, where should we look in order to understand this process? We must look at how groups produce knowledge of other groups. Since the advent of polities, knowledge accompanied power with a view to imposing some degree of order. To take but one example, the discipline of geography sprang from the need of generals to know the terrain on which they might fight. The geographical term region hails from the Latin verb *regere*, to rule; a region was constituted by its imposed rule (Neumann 1994).

We may draw a line from territory to people here. Any polity consists of three elements: an administration, which is the top of the hierarchy; a territory, which may be loosely or broadly defined (a loose definition would include things like nomadic treks); and people. From the Romans onwards, the Western tradition of knowledge production has classified territory in terms of regions. We have also classified people in terms of *ethnoi* or *gentes*. To the Greeks and later to the Romans, what the Greeks called an *ethnos* and the Romans called a *gens* was simply a group other than the we, other than 'us'. Herwig Wolfram's summary of how this worked when Romans wrote sagas about Germanic tribes may be quoted at length in this regard for its general purchase:

> Words such as *gens*, *genus*, *genealogia* and *natio*, refer to a community of biological descent. The tribal sagas, however, equate *people* with *army* and thus remain true to historical reality. In addition, the sources attest the polyethnic character of the *gentes*. These *gentes* never comprise all potential members of a *gens*, but are instead always mixed. Therefore their formation is not a matter of common descent but one of political

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> decision. Initially this implies not much more than the ability to unite and keep together the multitribal groups that make up any barbarian army. The leaders and chiefs of 'well-known' clans, that is to say, of those families that derive their origins from gods and who can prove their divine favor through appropriate achievements, form the 'nuclei of tradition' around which new tribes take shape. Whoever acknowledges the tribal tradition, either by being born into or by being 'admitted' to it, is part of the *gens* and as such a member of a community of 'descent through tradition'. The history of a *gens* is a subject of ethnography, and ethnography, as the name implies, deals 'descriptively with peoples'. By definition these *ethnoi* or *gentes* do not belong to the observer's superior culture. They remain outside the civilized world (Wolfram 1988: 5–6).

Here, we have a key point. Just as the regions postulated by the Romans did not necessarily correspond to the way non-Romans living in those regions divided up their territory, so the *ethnoi* of the Greeks and Romans did not necessarily correspond to the way the people so classified actually classified themselves. Descriptions in terms of ethnicity are descriptions of Others, not of Selves. The ancient Greeks famously defined barbarians as those who did not speak Greek; what came out of their mouths was just some bar-bar, that is, blah-blah. This tells us that ancient Greeks defined the Self in terms of language, but it also tells us that their classificatory scheme was not exactly fine-grained. It was, indeed, binary: what was outside of the Greek-speaking world remained, in its linguistic aspect, undifferentiated. Such a classificatory scheme would most certainly not have been in synch with the classificatory schemes of the peoples it classified, who would, by necessity if they wanted to maintain a separate we, have to differentiate themselves not only from Greeks but also from others. This could be done in a number of ways, with linguistic differentiation being but one possibility.

Greeks also used hairstyle as a key marker, or diacriticon, of difference. Can we assume that language and hairstyle were equally important diacritica to others? Of course we cannot. As a matter of fact, we know empirically that they were not. For example, the polities living on the Pontic Steppe north of the Greek colonies along the Black Sea coast did not define themselves primarily in terms of language or hair style. Both were certainly identity markers, but they were identity markers on a lower level than the polity. The Scythians or the Huns were multi-language (and multi-hairstyle) polities, and there is no indication that they had a commonly held concept of shared ancestry *as a polity*.[3] A colleague and I have recently argued elsewhere at book's length (Neumann and Wigen, forthcoming) that nomads of the Eurasian Steppe were certainly interested in common biological beginnings, inasmuch as the household was the basic social unit and the household was kinship based. We may stretch the point and say that tribes did uphold we-feeling by socially acknowledging and confirming biological kinship, as well as by forging metaphorical kinship (but see Sneath 2007). Nomads may also be said to have been interested in collective enacting of socially differentiating signs, in the sense that a key identity marker of an adult nomad was the ability to use a bow and arrow from horseback. However, and this is the key point, neither of these 'ethnic' markers pertained to the level of specific steppe

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polities, for these polities were simply ever-changing conglomeration of different tribes. The we-ness of the steppe polity did not hail from ancestral identity, but from sworn allegiance to a leader, imposed or otherwise.

A case: early Slavs

'*Ethnos*' and '*gens*' marked imposed identities. These concepts were at the core of the vocabulary Greeks and Roman used to categorize others. 'We' are civilisation, 'they' are barbaric *ethnoi*. Let us take as our example of how security and ethnicity interacts the case of a group of people which was close to the steppe in so many ways, namely, Slav-speaking tribes, and let us use as our guide a magisterial work that draws on archaeological, anthropological and historical knowledge to discuss the topic, namely, Florin Curta's 2001 book *The Making of the Slavs*.

Curta's chronotopical point of departure are the sixth-century Danube limes of the East Roman/Byzantine empire, which had been recently fortified by emperor Justinian (r. 527–65, as a 'complex interface' (Curta 2001: 2). This is important, for it means that Curta discounts speculations about a Slav *Urheimat* on the steppe, in the wetlands, in the forest etc. and concentrates rather on social interaction as the fount of ethnicity.[4] Curta's historiographic point of departure is contemporary writers like Procopius and Jordanes.[5] This is also significant, for it means that he discounts the idea that there are references to Slavs in earlier sources, like Tacitus. Curta's theoretical point of departure is new archaeology, where culture is seen as participated in, rather than shared (Curta 2001: 29). By necessity, the socio-psychological aspect of identity will have to be bracketed when the data available are exclusively or primarily material, as is most often the case in archaeology. By the same token, material culture cannot be understood as a property of a group, but as part of its life. What matters for the constitution of a group, then, is what kind of power constellation that invites the use of which artefacts (discourse), and how people use artefacts in response to such invitations (practice). As Curta puts it programmatically (with reference to Hodder 1982: 187, 205): 'the use of material culture in distinguishing between self-conscious ethnic groups leads to discontinuities in material culture distributions that may be easily detected by archaeological means' (Curta 2011: 536).

The archaeological record gives no inkling of there having been any Slavic trading posts, hilltop forts or towns, but we know from early writers that they did practice itinerant agriculture. We also know that their material culture was distinct from material cultures such as Przeworsk and Wielbark, which seem to have been largely Germanic-speaking tribes (associated with what was to become Vandals and Goths, respectively):

> Most of the remains of their [i.e. Slavs'] material culture found in excavations are utilitarian, small in quantity and very unprepossessing in character. Unlike the majority

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> of earlier populations in this area, they used very few metal ornaments. Most of the material of this first phase of Slav culture consists of handmade and bonfire-fired gritty pottery of a restricted range of forms. This material, when compared with the fine fabrics of the pottery of the Przeworsk, Wielbark and Cherniakhovo cultures, has an extremely 'home-made' look (Barford 2001: 38).

The early Roman writers grouped Slavs with (other) nomads that seem to have been the Slavs' masters, particularly the better-organised Avars, but also the Hunnic group known as Cutrugars. The close interaction, and probably multi-lingual character, of these tribes are born by the etymological evidence:

> The early development of the Slav languages in a group made up of elements from different backgrounds is betrayed by the existence of loan words from a number of languages, including those from Germanic and Iranian. These overlay a substrate of elements derived from the Proto-(Balto-) Slavic languages. Indeed it seems very likely that the Slav language was one of the main languages spoken as a lingua franca in at least part of the communication community that was the Avar khaganate (Barford 2001: 34).[6]

The early writers also noted characteristic steppe nomadic ways of waging warfare, such as the stratagem of the feigned retreat, as being typically 'Slavic' (Curta 2001: 314). They stress the tribal and fairly flat nature of political organisation – the Sclavenes are said to have leaders that were frequently killed during feasts and on travel, that is, not on the battlefield – but also mention that the Antes have a king.

Curta (2001: 42) reads this debate about the Slavs amongst Roman writers as a debate about how to handle barbarians militarily. The debate is, in other words, not only about identity but also about security. Knowledge production is directly in the service of specific military concerns.[7] The inverse point that knowledge and identity production is of direct importance to security is one that security studies were late to take on board, but which asserted itself with a vengeance toward the end of the Cold War once security studies began to branch away from its hitherto asocial mode of analysis (Neumann and Sending 2017). To mention but two landmark studies, in 1990 Richard Ashley and R.J.B. Walker edited a special issue of *International Studies Quarterly* that foregrounded the importance of the social to security (see especially Klein 1990, who analysed the identity work that goes into forging and maintaining a military alliance). Similar concerns were prominently on display in the landmark edited volume *The Culture of National Security* (Katzenstein 1996), which succeeded in bringing them into the mainstream. Katzenstein noted that students of security had basically slept through the end of the Cold War and ignored domestic political factors such as nationalism. He might well have broadened his critique to include the entire academic study of security, and also its subject matter, for as we have seen, questions of identity have been imbricated with security concerns since the very emergence of polities, and so antedate the coming of nations and nationalism.

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Going back to our case of such emergence, the Slav *ethnos*, we should also add that it was a typical trait of migrating groups of the time that they were semi-nomadic and that different tribes developed different niches. What is beyond doubt is that there existed in the sixth century a number of tribes, such as Baiunetes, Belegezites, Berzetes, Drugubites, Sagudates, Wends, which predominantly spoke Slavic. In terms of analytical classification, these early polities stopped short of being chiefdoms – that is, they were not 'redistributional societies with a permanent central agency of coordination' (Service 1971: 134) – for economic flows seem to have been fairly unregulated by hierarchical structures. Curta (2001: 322–25) understands these predominantly Slavic-speaking polities in terms of tribes led by great-men (whose authority may be acquired or ascribed but is in any case based on resources other than wealth, typically military leadership) and big-men (who establish themselves by beginning to accumulate and redistribute economic goods), with these great-men sometimes joining in confederation.[8] The reports that sixth-century Slavic tribal leaders were killed during feasts make good sense in such as setting, where a number of warriors have a direct interest in the great-man not being able to establish himself as a big-men, let alone chief, and would therefore have an immediate incentive to nip a burgeoning big-man or chief in the bud.[9] This seems to have worked; at least '[t]here is no indication of Slavic chiefs before c. 560' (Curta 2001: 332).[10]

During the 560s, as the Byzantines were fortifying their limes south of the Danube, reports from the limes began to change. Sclavenes were reported to be moving south of the Danube and becoming more tightly organised politically. Although it became more pressing to know details of tribal affiliations given their increased proximity, there are markedly fewer references to tribes (Curta 2001: 118). A hundred years later, Slavs were reported to be organised into two polities: the Severeis and the Seven Tribes. There had obviously been a reorganisation and a consolidation. To Curta, it is exactly this reorganisation that is the birth of a Slavic *ethnos.* The Byzantines reached out to an early tribe (the Ante, in 545) by offering them a *foedus*, that is, an alliance where they would fight other barbarians in exchange for entering Roman territory and Roman social structures. Such a *foedus* could only be negotiated by a leader, and so the Roman interpellation furthered a change in political organisation from tribal confederation to a more tight-knit polity, a chiefdom, amongst the Antes, simply in order to have someone to talk to (cf. Curta 2001: 332).[11] Note that there is also a parallel and competing security logic afoot, for chiefdoms of the kind formed by the Ante were of course much more capable of staging successful raids into the Roman interior than their predecessors the loose confederations.[12] As seen from the point of view of the Byzantines, security needs spelt a need for talking to barbarians, which they answered by raising up something the specific detachments of barbarians did not have before, namely, a great-man and eventually a chief to rule an emerging *ethnos.* However, the emergence of an ethnos lent the detachment of barbarians a stronger identity, and hence increased action capacity, which

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meant that the formation of an *ethnos* was also a security challenge to the Byzantines. Here, we have the identity/security nexus in full flow.

To sum up, language was important as raw material for the emergence of an ethnos, but there is no direct fit between language and polity, for the people involved were not exclusively Slavic speaking. Slavic was also used by others, probably even as a *lingua franca* in and around the Avar Kaghanate and later in Bulgaria. Language was chosen as a criterion by the Byzantines, for *they* thought it was imperative to polity formation, and as Butler (1997: 5) puts it, only that which is recognisable can be recognised. 'Slavs did not become Slavs because they spoke Slavic, but because they were called so by others' (Curta 2001: 346). Language does not an *ethnos* make. Note that the Byzantine discourse that interpellated the Slavs was a discourse of what we now call security – it is a military-political discourse. The interpellation works in a number of ways on the individual level, including the display of certain material markers of ethnicity such as a particular type of brooch to fasten cloaks with which by dint of such use becomes a 'Slavic' bow fibula (Curta 2001: 225, 310) and of ovens that were used to bake flat loaves. It also works at the more aggregated level, as ethnicity becomes a new resource to forge more complex polities (the Severeis, the Seven Tribes), and a means for leaders to maintain loyalty to themselves and their polities.

In light of discussions to come, one last point should be added. Some of the 'Slavic' fibulae, whose use seems to have been constitutive of Slavic ethnicity, also seem to have indexed a heroic past, namely, the Hunnic period of Attila (Curta 2001: 434). Some of the people wearing them could credibly make this connection since some of their ancestors were remembered to have had relations with Huns. The fact that these were subaltern relations was not of the essence, the point was that relations existed, so that the wearers could partake in and advertise their right to partaking in memories of past glory. This is highly significant, for we see here a tentative use of the past to legitimate the newly emergent phenomenon of ethnicity.[13] What had started as an identity ascribed by an Other – the Byzantines – is embraced and perpetuated by an emergent Self – the Slavs.

Since language is a vehicle of communication, and communication is a necessity for forging a polity, language as such must be of importance for identity. In light of language's subsequent centrality in the emergence of nationalism, however, it is also important to note the disconnect between ethnicity and any one spoken language. As Curta (2001: 347) sums it up, the ethnic groups he has studied 'were not classified in terms of language or culture, but in terms of their military and political potential'. So language does not an *ethnos* make, but paired up with interpellation from a more complex polity and with certain social practices such as indexing a heroic past added, it might.[14] The American philosopher Saul Kripke has underlined how naming is a kind of violence, for it freezes, or even creates, a phenomenon that was until then fluid, or even non-existent. In the doling out of the status of *ethnos* to certain groups, on the basis of categories and characteristics that are yours

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and not theirs, the Byzantines ordered the world in their image. The outside world became something it had not been before, namely, an ethnic place, and non-Byzantine humans became defined by this new thing: ethnicity.[15]

Ethnos to nation

Curta (2001: 350) ends his path-breaking book with the wry observation that '[t]he first clear statement that "we are Slavs" comes from the twelfth-century Russian Primary Chronicle. With this chronicle, however, the making of the Slavs ends and another story begins: that of their "national" use for claims of ancestry'.

Curta is certainly correct in arguing that studies of nationalism have pushed back to the eleventh and twelfth century in order to find the raw material out of which nineteenth-century nations emerged. The debate on these matters seems to congeal around the English and the French and how they self-identify in the Middle Ages (Hastings 1997). In these cases, the stress is not on how groups are being interpellated by others, but as Curta notes, on the production of narratives about some theme – ancestry, Christendom etc. – *within* the setting of the polity. There are continuities. In the twelfth-century case noted by Curta, Slavic-speaking monks write about Slavs and the beginnings of Rus'. A number of tribes are mentioned as founders. One of them, the Meria, was decidedly primarily Finno-Ugric speaking, as distinct from Slavic speaking. The problem remains: If the people written about in these early sources identified with their tribe, and the polity to which some of them belonged consisted of Slavs and other *ethnoi*, then what exactly was the status of 'Slavs' for these people? The fact of the constitutive outside also remains: the narratives a group comes to tell about themselves – that is, their identity narrative –must be accepted by the rest of the world in order to be stabilised (Campbell 1992). This process of stabilising us-them relations is invariably tied up with questions of security. James C. Scott (2009) made a point similar to Curta's in the context of Southeast Asia, when he insisted that 'tribes' are created by states that seek to order the world in its image. In Scott's reading, before states, there are simply groups; only when states begin to name what they see as a less developed and less ordered constitutive outside in order to secure its own Self, are 'tribes' born.[16]

It is also quite striking that, a century and a half after the advent of the nation in Europe, British anthropologists who worked in Africa and elsewhere still tried to order the social space they studied in terms of *ethnoi*, understood as something that pertained to others only, and not in terms of nations.[17] To the political eye, one obvious reason for this is to do with security. Let us follow Gellner and think of nationalism as the political doctrine that the nation and the state should coincide. Nationalism, then, is a specific answer to the question of we-ness that all polities have to deal with: 'we' are the nation, the territory of the polity is a national territory, and the administration of

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the polity is staffed with nationals. Nationalism is inherently internationalist, in the sense that it comes complete with a recipe for world order: the world should be ordered in nations. Since there is no such thing as a culturally homogeneous territory of any size, a national world order cannot be stable, for there will always be matter out of place: minorities, nomads, expats, foreign spouses, tourists, liminal elements. Nationalism secures a certain homogenised Self by playing up one kind of difference, ethnicity, as crucial and thereby takes a lot of wind out of the sails of other kinds of similarity and difference that could serve to dampen the effects of that particular kind of difference. Ethnicity becomes a shibboleth, that is, a shorthand for group belonging altogether.[18] However, this homogenising securing of a nation comes at the price of potential instability internally, since all groups can hardly be altogether eliminated. Groups constituted by ethnic difference – ethnic minorities – remain a potential source of instability. Furthermore, other kinds of difference that have to do with class, age, sexual orientation, level of education etc. will remain as potential sources of instability.

Where there is instability, there is concern about security. If instability is structurally caused by a principle, and if instability gives rise to security concerns, then that principle and security are inextricably linked. It follows that a nationalist world order is one where security is always in question, at least potentially. Since the mid-1990s, security studies have evolved a comprehensive approach to explaining how such potential sources of insecurity as nationalism become actualised. It happens by dint of a speech act, whereby a person or an institution in authority pronounces a phenomenon to be not only a political challenge, but also a threat to the self's very ability to go on as before. The process whereby something is made into an existential or ontic threat to a polity's security is called securitization.[19]

The concept of securitization may also help us understand how ethnicity also becomes a potential political resource, for if *ethnos* may be turned into nation, then the argument for self-determination is already made. The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imperial answer to this problem was to insist on the historicity of nations (Wolff 1982 [2010]). For an *ethnos* to be a nation, nineteenth-century Europeans argued, it needed some predecessor in the ancient world. So say, the *ethnoi* in Zambia could not be nations, for then they would be half way on their way to statehood, and that would be a challenge to the British empire in Zambia. Again, we are seeing a replay of Greek and Roman mistakes. Greeks and Romans too thought other peoples had no history, and the reason was that they thought – mistakenly – that membership in these peoples was determined by birth (Geary 2002: 50). So a group may 'have' ethnicity, or it may have history, but it cannot have both. As far as I am aware, this logic first returns to the modern world in the 1820s, in North America, when the Haudenosaunee or Iroquois quite smartly insisted on nationhood. This was denied them by American colonists, on the ground that they allegedly lacked an historical depth – quite wrongly, as it has turned out, for the Iroquois league seems to have been around at least since

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the fourteenth century. If, however, the Iroquois had been acknowledged as a nation, then the manifest destiny of the American state would have been put into question, and that would have constituted an ontic threat. Security concerns were crucial, then, to the denial of nationhood to groups within European and American nineteenth and twentieth century states and empires.

There is a wider issue here, for the anchoring of nations in the past was a matter of ontic security not only for aspiring nations, but for all nations and all nation-states. It is a by now much-belaboured point that European historians have been key nation-builders, so let me rather focus on security and the role of archaeology, which was another kind of knowledge that came in handy in this regard.

Like geography, archaeology was born of security needs, but it was only born some two centuries ago. It is no coincidence that its emergence dovetails nicely with the emergence of nationalism as a political doctrine, for the major inspiration, German romantic thinking, was the same. The place was Denmark and the time was the Napoleonic Wars. The Danish King had the bad luck of having allied with Napoleon, and things were looking grim. With inspiration from German Romanticism, which was already well established at Copenhagen University, one of the ways to boost morale was to begin inquiring into old stuff. More specifically, the King charged a professor by the name of Christian Thomsen with putting a lot of old artefacts on display, so as to demonstrate the antiquity and, by romantic lights, greatness of the Danish nation. Thomsen had to order the stuff that had been dug up somehow. He did this by focussing on what the different artefacts were made of. Thomsen then went on to postulate that stuff made of stone had to be older than stuff made of bronze, which would in turn be older than iron artefacts. The idea of a prehistory, a three-phased prehistory, was born (Renfrew 2007).

There was one problem. How do you get from a prehistory of artefacts to a history of peoples? The problem persists to this day (Curta 2011). Archaeologists define culture materially, as ‘a recurring set of artefact types that co-occur in a particular region during a set time-period’ (Anthony 2007: 130).[20] Anthropologists, in the degree that they still use the concept at all (Kuper 2000), define culture as practices, as social facts, or as both – that is, as social stuff. So, if the goal is to produce knowledge that may anchor a socially defined entity, namely, the nation, in a materially defined past, what is the glue between the social and the material?

The answer to that neatly presented itself at about the same time as Thomsen invented prehistory, in 1786, when Sir William Jones observed the similarity between Sanskrit, Greek and Roman.[21] As the study of Indo-European languages got under way, it became possible to re-spool the emergence of languages by comparing the phonetics and the meanings of words stemming from the same root in the oldest known written Indo-European languages. By comparing phonetics and adding knowledge about how phonetics change historically, and by identifying their overlapping

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meaning, it became possible to postulate Proto-Indo-European words like *wódr for water and *devi for god, although Proto-Indo-European was of course a dead and always oral language that could never be observed directly (Mallory and Adams 2006). It was quite clear that Indo-Europeans in-migrated from the east – where else should they come from? – so it was possible to align material findings and linguistic evolution along an east–west gradient. Given romanticism's stress on language as a cultural marker, the following syllogism lay close at hand:

- Every *ethnos* is defined by its language.
- Slavic was a language.
- Ergo Slavs were an *ethnos*.

By the lights of the adage that every nation has to have a predecessor in the ancient world, it follows that present-day Slav nations hail from a common ancient *ethnos*. In the light of the above discussion, the error in this argument is easily spotted: it does not follow from the fact that people spoke similar languages that they also constituted an ethnos. Polity formation in the Eurasian steppe simply did not work like that. Nothing has only one origin. It follows that we can re-spool languages,[22] but we cannot re-spool social stuff in the same way. While not impossible, the entire attempt at anchoring the nations of today in the material cultures of yesterday is therefore a highly dangerous one (Curta 2011).

It is also a matter that is easily securitized. We need look no further than the quarrels between Bulgarians and Croats, Croats and Serbs, Russians and Ukrainians, Ukrainians and Poles about which material findings should be ascribed to whom, or to Stalin's use of a common Slavic origin to argue for Yugoslav or South Slav subordination in the 1940s, to see examples of this phenomenon and its effects. These are questions of what kind of future, secured by what kind of past, the polity (ideally the nation-state) in question will have.

To stay with Slavic examples, present-day Russian nationalism also blatantly demonstrates another interstice between security and nationalism that springs from how the nation is conceived in time. This has to do with the root metaphor of the sleeping nation. Early nation-builders were faced with a problem. If each nation had an anchoring predecessor in the ancient world, then what had happened to this nation? Why was it not in sight? The answer was that it was sleeping, and that it was the responsibility, even the sacred task, of nation-builders to awaken it. The nation, then, was anchored in the past, but it was at the same time young and rested – invigorated by sleep, as it were – and destined to take over the future. This logic has an implicit security logic to it as well, for in the realm of organic metaphors like this one, what needs to be born and grow needs to do so at the cost of what needs to wither and die. The birth and growth of a nation demands the withering and death of something else.

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In the case of Russian nationalism, it is quite clear what is young and vital, and what is old and tired. Some twenty years ago, I wrote my first doctorate on how Russian nationalism from its very inception, from the days of Vladimir Odoyevsky (1803–1869), treated Europe as its main Other and as old and tired. This argument was taken a step further a hundred years ago, when Stepan Shevyrev declared that Europe was already rotten, with a stench of death about it. The representation of Europe as rich but rotten and Russia as poor but vital; Europe as democratically led and weak, Russia as led by a strongman and, well, strong; Europe as being faithless, Russia as being the true believer etc. is now back. There are some new twists regarding exactly what the rot consists of, with matters sexual and reproductive coming to the fore. Europe's decadence and rottenness is now said to be evident from a penchant for multiculturalism, but also from the tolerance of homosexuality, paedophilia and incest. This is a major theme of the Russian Orthodox Church, and Orthodoxy is now routinely evoked as a key *diacriticon* for Russian nationalism and a key component of Russian *assabiya*, as when President Vladimir Putin declared already in 2007 how.

> Orthodoxy and the nuclear sector strengthen Russian statehood and security. These themes are closely interconnected, because the Russian Federation's traditional confession and Russia's nuclear shield are the elements that strengthen Russian statehood, create the necessary preconditions for safeguarding the country's internal and external security (quoted in Østbø 2016: 212).

The idea that Europe and the west are qualitatively different from Russia and something threatening is not only back. It is officially back. It has become part of official Russian nationalism. In 2014, a working group led by the head of the President's administration, Sergey Ivanov, presented a document called Bases for the State's Cultural Politics.[23] The document was embraced by President Putin and used repeatedly by Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinski. According to this document, Russia is a unique civilisation, between east and west (the document also stated that 'Russia is not Europe', but this statement was removed after numerous protests from artists and intellectuals; Neumann 2017). The document details a number of ways to enhance patriotic pride, such as strengthening school curricula regarding Russian history, staging museum exhibitions, etc. Since the publication of the document, there has indeed been a marked upturn in the debate about nationalist agitation in schools, preferably already from the first grade onwards. Museums have beefed up on patriotism. A recent exhibition in the Manège just off Red Square concerned Ivan Grozni (variously translated as Ivan the Terrible, Ivan the Threatening), who was depicted as a vital and strong leader forever under attack from devious Europe.[24] What is at issue here is not only securitization of past sequences, but also legitimation of the future. Europe and the west have 'always' tried to keep the Russian nation from reaching its full potential, and they are still at it. The only way to defend Russia is to fight back, and history is a weapon with which to reach the future that rightly belongs to a young and

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vital nation with an old and hallowed past such as Russia. The security implications of this kind of cosmology should be immediately obvious.

Conclusion

Security is about upholding group identity, in the sense that it concerns when and how to represent what is happening in the world as a threat to the Self's ability to go on, and what to do to forestall such threats. In a world of scarce resources, security is an imperative for any polity. My focus on security in the emergence of ethnicity and nationalism has highlighted three aspects worthy of further study. The first concerns how ethnicity is an imposed category. The second concerns how nationhood was a category denied to others, and the third aspect is to do with how nationalism's ever-present organic metaphors in and of themselves spell security concerns.

The emergence of ethnicity was first and foremost driven by security concerns: it was imposed on the Other as a way of ordering what was outside the Self, to make it more manageable and less threatening. One way of thinking about the Other's identity, what we now call ethnicity, emerged amongst the Greeks and Romans and resulted in the interpellation of ever new groups into a self-understanding as an *ethnos.* This kind of knowledge production is not only steeped in asymmetrical power – the interpellating party makes an entire polity do something it otherwise would not have done, namely, evolve into an *ethnos* – it is also often explicitly securitizing. As demonstrated above, that was certainly the case where Slav-Byzantine relations in the early Middle Ages were concerned.

If ethnicity is an identity for the Other, then nationalism is an identity for the Self. It becomes a security concern not to order the Other polity's identity, as did the Byzantines, but to see to it that groups that may threaten the Self's own nationalism – minorities, imperial subjects – cannot embrace nationalism. The basic reason for this is obvious: if ethnic groups were given the status of nation, then by the logic of nationalism, that would bring these polities on a par with their imperial masters. The policy followed by all nineteenth-century European empires and their settler colonies of denying nationhood to, say, the Iroquois in North America or allegedly ahistorical groups in Africa and Eastern Europe by denying that they had a history and so did not qualify as nations must be understood amongst other things as security policy.

The organic understanding of the nation as young and vital demonstrates a third interstice between security and nationalism. If the young and vital nation is to grow and expand at the expense of the old and tired ones, and if it is warranted in doing so by nature itself, then the polity that represents itself as a young and vital nation is by dint of that very representation a security threat against those that they represent as old and tired. One contemporary example of how this works may be seen in contemporary Russia, where it is becoming state policy that Russia is a vital force with a claim to a future, whereas liberal

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Europe is an old and dying wreck. The act of denying a future to another polity is a securitizing move, for security is, by definition, about warding off what are seen as threats to a polity's ability to go on as before. Nationalism was imbricated with security concerns from the very beginning and remains so imbricated.

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Endnotes

1 Note that I limit myself to collective security threats; individual security is a rather different phenomenon that will not be addressed here.

2 A similar move was made by neo-realists like Barry Posen and Steve van Evera in the early 1990s, who simply kept their structural framework, but substituted nations for states as units of analysis. As did Huntington's, this move effectively bracketed the issues discussed here.

3 Note that the elite or royal (Lat. *stirps regis*) kinship line that delivered rulers – what the Mongols called Golden Kin – certainly was integrative on that level. Kinship is important to all polities (Haugevik and Neumann 2017). The point here is that kinship was not in play as an integrative force for the polity as a whole – the glue here was follow the leader, not kinship.

4 He also stresses the importance of raw material – or what John Armstrong and Anthony D. Smith (1986: 229, n. 29) called a *mythomoteur*, for the formation of ethnicity. 'Ethnicity is constituted at the intersection of habitual dispositions of the agents concerned and the social conditions existing in a particular historical context' (Curta 2001: 21).

5 Here is Curta's (2001: 37–8) introduction to the key work: 'Procopius' view of the Slavs is a function of his general concept of oikumene. An analysis of his diplomatic terminology reveals his idea of an empire surrounded by 'allies' (*enopondoi*), such as the Saracens, the Lombards, the Gepids, the Goths, the Cutrigars [a Hunnic tribe], and the Antes. The Sclavenes do not belong to this group, most probably because Procopius viewed them as 'new'. Indeed, amongst all forty-one references to Sclavenes or Antes in Procopius' work […] all verbs used in reference to settlements […] appear in the present tense or in the medium voice. Procopius constantly referred to Sclavenes in relation to Antes and Huns or to other nomads. When talking about Slavic dwellings, he employed *kalibai*, a phrase he only used for military tents and for Moorish compounds. Both this phrase and the claim that the Slavs set-up their dwellings far from one another betray the influence of military technology.'

6 Pohl's (2003: 583, 587) reading of the social sequence grounding this etymological development is illuminating: 'Obviously, the key to Slavicization is not Slavic power. Slavs did not spread by expanding their dominion but under the direct or indirect rule of Avars, Bulgars and other lords. I have therefore tried to explain the expansion of early Slavs by the attraction of a social and cultural model that implied a lower level of social differentiation and surplus production than both the Byzantine Empire and the barbarian kingdoms. Sixth- and seventh-century Byzantine sources indicate that Slavs, unlike all others, did not enslave their prisoners of war but allowed them to

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settle freely amongst them. There is some incidental evidence that the inhabitants of Slavic villages north of the lower Danube were of quite mixed origin. This way of life may have appealed to the rural population in a wide area. Their produce had previously gone to the Byzantine state, the Church and/or barbarian warlords, whose abilities to offer protection in return had seriously declined. Linguistic Slavicization may have only come later. […] Whoever migrated from the Avar empire came to be called a Slav if he settled in a rural community in the Slavic manner, for instance in the Peloponnes or in Dalmatia'.

7 It is warranted to talk about degrees here, for amongst ancient Greeks, who were still known and studied by the Byzantines a millennium later, there was also a tradition of embarking on blue skies travelling in order to seek out new peoples; such an expedition was known a *theoria* – a voyage of discovery:' the term *theoria* did not only mean philosophical contemplation, methodical scheme or rational statement of principles (as we generally understand the notion of theory today) but that it alsohad a twofold diplomatic sense. First, *theoria* was a name for the solemn or sacred embassy sent to consult the oracle (like the embassy to Delphi or Delos). […] Second, *theoria* was a freelance or ecumenical embassy of prominent citizens of the polis, 'sent abroad to see the world' with the purpose of finding out the laws and political ways of other peoples (non-Greeks) and bringing back this knowledge to inform and suggest reforms in the polis' (Constantinou 2006: 352–3).

8 'Big-men are leaders who organise feasts and festivals, daring warriors and commanders in warfare, aggressors in interpersonal and intergroup conflict. Orators, directors of communal work and enterprise, men of authority who arbitrate disputes within the community, ritual practitioners, magicians and sorcerers. Some dominate by their physical strength, particularly in contexts where leading warriors are politically important, some by force of character. […] Maurice Godelier [1986: 105–10] took as a starting point that the big-man system is derived from the great-man system. To Godelier, a big-man belongs within a peculiar institutional system, in which the principle of competitive exchange takes precedence over the principle of war. By contrast, the great-man advances alone towards the enemy lines, followed by a handful of assistants, and engages in single combat with any warrior prepared to match his skill and strength. He gains prestige, a name for himself, and admiration, but not wealth. In times of war, his authority is unquestioned; in peacetime his function disappears, but his prestige remains' (Curta 2001: 328–9). In other words, the great-man is a champion. For contemporary use of the big-man category, see Utas (2012).

9 We have documented examples of how great-men tried to set themselves up as chiefs amongst neighbouring Germanic peoples, with one successful example being Maroboduus of the Germanic Marcomanni (Todd 1992: 29–31).

10 There is another possibility that Curta (2001: 349) is very open to, namely, that early writers did not record names of leaders because these groups were not important enough for them to do so. The whole thrust of his argument points to the unlikelihood of these leaders having been strong enough to deserve the title of chief, though.

11 'Big-men and chiefs became prominent especially in contexts in which they embodied collective interest and responsibility. Chiefs like Dauritas and Samo "created" groups by speaking and taking action in the name of their respective communities' (Curta 2001: 343).

12 Note also that the Byzantine interpellation of groups into *ethnoi* had the unwanted consequence of strengthening Slavic *assabiya.* By being the opposite of divide and rule, it called forth a security threat. Once realised, Byzantines tried to counteract this effect by belatedly trying to block the formation of Slav polities, as did the Slav's Avar overlords. Still, '[i]n the course of the seventh century, the decline of Avar rule made the formation of regional Slavic powers on the western periphery of the Avar empire possible' (Pohl 2003: 584).

13 Of course, fibulae, like all things, cannot index ethnicity all by themselves; they are simply raw material for the creation of social facts. As Wickham (1981: 68) puts it, 'a man or woman with a Lombard-style brooch is no more necessarily a Lombard than a family in Bradford with a Toyota is Japanese; artefacts are no secure guide to ethnicity').

14 The theme of how leading kinship lines of the contemporary Germanic neighbours of the Slav maintained their pre-eminence by invoking a great ancestral past, complete with religiously sanctioned successes, is a major theme in the literature about early Germanics.

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15 To be clear, and apropos of current debates about performativity, I would not argue that the Slav ethnos was created *ex nihilo*, as would, say, Cynthia Weber (Weber 1998: 78; for a critique, see Ringmar 2016), who holds that 'all subjects in process (be they individual or collective) are the ontological effects of practices which are performatively enacted'. Slavs did not come into existence by an act of performativity only; there was raw material there.
16 This book and this point build on and generalise his earlier book *Seeing Like a State* (1998), where he set out how high modernity regimes insist on ordering geographical and social space in their image.
17 When British anthropologists worked in the Zambian copper belt in the 1930s, they drew up lists of ethnic groups in the area. The list was long, but 'whites' was not on it. To colonial British anthropologists, as to Greeks and Romans before them, ethnicity was something others had. But as we have just seen, the problem is that they did not. The emic (self-describing) categories of the people studied remained stubbornly different from the etic (analytical, imposed from outside) models introduced first by the Byzantine and then by the British empire. While early British anthropologists tended to come from non-exalted backgrounds, some of them were steeped in classical writers like Tacitus, and many British colonial administrators certainly were. The degree in which British classifications were directly influenced by British classicist educational practices should be researched further.
18 See Hebrew bible, book seven, chapter 12.
19 The *locus classicus* is Wæver 1995. The literature on securitization is vast and growing. According to the serving editor of the flagship journal of the International Studies Association, *International Studies Quarterly*, a clear majority of manuscripts on security submitted to that journal is on securitization (personal communication from Daniel H. Nexon, 24 April 2016).
20 When finds are of one type only, say when one finds pottery with a certain decorative pattern in a large area but other artefacts are not similar, archaeologists talk about a horizon, i.e. an area that is interlinked but not necessarily culturally similar, Anthony (2007: 131) defines a horizon as 'a single artefact type or cluster of artefact types that spreads suddenly over a very wide geographical area'.
21 A relationship had been suggested before, but it was with Jones that the question became a problem for science to solve.
22 Note that a pristine Proto-Indo-European language never existed; for example, the word for bull, *tauros, seems to have been a Semitic loan word.
23 The document is available as http://static.kremlin.ru/media/events/files/41d526a877638a8730eb.pdf. For a highly critical rejoinder from 27 members of the Scientific Council of the Russian Academy of Sciences, see http://iph.ras.ru/cult_polit.htm. The first public airing of the document took place in Izvestiya, 10 April 2014; http://izvestia.ru/news/569016. All documents retrieved 9 April 2015.
24 See http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/31/world/europe/russian-museum-seeks-a-warmer-adjective-for-ivan-the-terrible.html?emc=edit_th_20150331&nl=todaysheadlines&nlid=33162912&_r=2; retrieved 9 April 2015.

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