

CHAPTER 12

WHAT'S AFTER THE NATION STATE? AN ATTEMPT AT SOCIOLOGICAL PROPHECY

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Introductory remarks

Hypotheses assuming that the nation state is retiring should not be treated as superfluous. The nation state is neither the final stage (in the Hegelian sense) of historical processes nor is the ethnic revival of the nineties a sign that nation states regain their position on the international scene. The gradual loosening of ties between nation and state in one part of Europe and dramatic drives for establishing (or reestablishing) 'own' nation states in the other one are, in essence, two faces of the same, repeated over and over again, process. It consists in a permanent, non-linear search for adequacy between social entities and their political and territorial organizations. The nation state is neither the curse nor blessing of humankind. In modern time it is, simply a, "human community of shared culture and territory" (Smith 1995, p. 45) plus its political organization. In other words, it is a community sovereign enough to be able to determinate its political institutions. Thus, although indeed the "obituary notice {even} of Western nationalism were, to put it mildly, premature" (Ra'anani 1991, p. 9), it is still not too early to analyze what nations are really doing with their states and why. It simply may be said that they endeavour to harmonize the distribution of political power with new potentialities of non-national technologies, communication and transportation, as well as with the European charter of human rights. Due to this tendency, some institutions, or at least part of their functions, are passing away with time. But the agent of change alters too. Nation, "*un plébiscite de tous les jours*" (Ernest Renan) or, in the Durkheim tradition, a 'collective personality', is like every individual personality "born in time" and "shall die in time" (Aron 1966, p. 750). State and nation may exist separately and are separable for analytical purposes. But, in the historical reality, especially when they have already instituted nation state, nations and states are interacting entities. Therefore, the entity, not just two separate elements, should become the subject of the gnostic reflection.

Globalization

It is beyond doubt that modification of nation state functions, observed in the second half of the twentieth century, are related to a much broader process of globalization. Paralleling the globalization of human affairs, "the state-centric world" coexist and interact with a "diffuse multi-centric world" (Camilleri and Falk 1992, p. 39, Rosenau 1988). Yet, for how much longer?

Factors such as the world-wide division of labour, economic internationalization, transnationalization of trade, production and finance, development of world-wide range weapons systems, internationalization of constitutional law, and last but not least, transport and communication revolutions seem - under normal conditions - irreversible. All of them, taken together, compose the inner fabric of globalization. Breaking old autarkies and reconstructing network of dependence between centers, semi-peripheries and peripheries, they recreate the world into a systemic phenomenon of multidimensional inter-dependence (Wallerstein 1974, 1980, 1983).

The geopolitics, which in the old days struggled for a direct, mostly military, control over various dimensions of space, now assume indirect and, to a substantial degree, a transnational form of organization and distribution of power. "In this way the power of global culture, global communication, the global market and related factors, including that which has been called postmodern, penetrate through the imagined boundaries of nation state, conditioning and shaping the national will and constructing the perspective of the possible and desirable from which its relative 'power' to exert sovereignty will be exercised" (Camilleri and Falk 1992, p. 61). At the same time new problems arise, which, by their very nature cannot only be tackled by the sovereign nation states. These are transnational and global, problems, such as: "international terrorism, control of outer space, exploitation of marine resources, the need for restraints upon multinational corporations and pollution of the biosphere" (Lawson 1993, p. 525). They demand solutions on a global scale. At last, individuals become more and more mobile: occupationally, socially and spatially. There are good reasons to assume that the latter, in the form of transnational migration especially, may become the problem of the coming century. Disproportion between political freedom already achieved and untenable conditions of life has always produced the 'push factor' for migration. Then, millions of individuals move transnational and try to overcome deprivation. Yet migration is not only the result of but also the stimulus for globalization (Kubiak 1993).

As the globe shrinks and societies of today, as Piotr Sztompka has observed, "become interdependent in all aspects of their lives, political, economic, cultural, and the scope of these interdependencies becomes truly global (...). Today one may speak of a global structure of political, economic and cultural relations, extending beyond any traditionally binding separate societies

into one system" (1993, p. 86). Global factors and inter-societal interactions, not the "intra-societal embryonic potentialities" (Sztompka 1993, p. 189) are now the pendulum of historical dynamics. Therefore, "It is futile to analyze the processes of societal development of our multiple 'national' societies as if they were autonomous, internally evolving structures, when they are and have been in fact primarily structures created by and taking form in response to world-scale processes" (Wallerstein 1991, p. 77; quoted after Sztompka 1993, p. 189). Moreover, these global forces do not act separately, in different arenas of political, economic and socio-cultural reality, but create rather a syndrome. Yet, the pace of changes in every part of "the holy trinity" is not even. The most reluctant seems to be culture in its national forms.

National Culture and Language

While the victory of the system of parliamentary democracy and market economy seems to be, like it or not, non-disputable, culture exposes problems of its own. It is so because of time and personality factors. National cultures do not exist, simply, *hic et nunc*, but are diachronic by their very nature. They are a consequence of intergenerational transmission not only in technical terms, but psychological as well. Past generations live in culture and, by culture, impose on their successor a specific sense of obligation. Furthermore, culture is, like de Saussure's *langue* and *parole*, not only the abstract system, something *outside* and *above* people, but lives also *inside* of their personalities and emotions, confirming itself via daily individual and collective experiences. Most certainly, national cultures in their standardized versions are also, as this has been so convincingly demonstrated by Ernest Gellner (1983), a product of states and intellectuals purposeful actions. But, what is equally true, they are able to live only by internalization, regional landscape and fatherland's feeling. Due to all these, national cultures are only alike functionally. By their substance they are particularistic, if not esoteric. 'National' is in this sense every culture, as well demotic (e.g. American) as ethnic (e.g. Polish). Universalization of political systems, technologies, products available on the market etc. does not alter, and one does not need to be that clear-sighted to notice that, the general identity of a given nation state. But it is not so with culture. Globalization dismantles national culture and, thus, deconstructs entities found by these cultures. Yet, globalization of culture is the reality to the same degree as the persistence of national cultures. For how long will they be able to resist the pressure of globalization? Will they be able to exist without the protective umbrella of their own state?

One of classic answers to these questions was given by Florian Znaniecki (1934 and 1952). He thought that national cultures are the treasures of humankind and the collapse of any of them would be a great loss to humankind.

They may survive the disintegration of national states because international conflicts are a product of states, but not cultural, competition. This is a similar idea to that of Johann Gottfried von Herder from his *Letters on the Advancement of Mankind* that "Fatherlands do not march against each other" but "lie quietly side by side and help each other like families". Znaniecki asserts that national culture (i.e. "distinct secular, literary culture") can survive if they are able to maintain "an independent organization functioning for the preservation, growth, and expansion of this culture" (1952, p. 21). But nation is not identical with state and national state is only one of a number of possible organizations needed for the preservation of national culture. They could be smaller than today's states. Thus, political restructuring of Europe is possible. National culture should survive because global culture lives through them. They are "dynamic, and it is their continual growth which makes the emergence and growth of a 'supranational' world culture possible" (1952, p. 176). Therefore, the culture of the future will be neither a product of international relations nor transnational contacts, but a sum of "past achievements and future potentialities" of nations. World culture is not yet ready and completed and never will be. "I mean the elimination of the present diversity of culture, for it cannot be created out of nothing" (1952, 176).

Still another point of view has been expressed by Ulf Hannerz (Sztompka 1993, p. 92-94) in the eighties. He sees the process of changes as a gradual enlargement of human *ecumene*: from closed in time and space into global. Unification (or 'creolization') of today's peripheral cultures (national and others) with the center may be concluded under the following scenarios: of *global homogenization* (when, all other cultures annihilate under the pressure of western culture values, patterns, beliefs etc.), *saturation* (when in a chain of succeeding generations, the culture of peripheries absorb elements of the western culture and, gradually, disintegrates itself totally), *corruption* (when peripheries: 1. adopt products of a mass rather than higher culture and, in the case of higher culture, 2. distorts and corrupts "received values in order to adjust them to customary local ways of life"; Sztompka 1993, p. 93) and *maturation scenario* (when peripheries develop their own culture by amalgamating, or incorporating, elements of metropolitan culture, but only after an initial adaptation to local conditions).

It is important to remember that all known, until now, nation-forming processes have involved the policy of eradicating ethnic traditions except those of the national core or, using another name, *Staatsvolk*. Is the process of cultural globalization aiming at the same end?

The picture is much more clear with respect to language. Although at the end of twentieth century English become the global language, "it supplements rather than replaces national languages" (Hobsbawm 1990, p. 39). A "common system of verbal communication between nationalities", though functionally necessary, cannot become a "substitute for national languages" because "their uniqueness

enhances the originality of (national) creative works, past, present and future" (Znaniecki 1952, p. 178).

English as *lingua franca* of contemporary civilization, and *vernaculars* of today serve quite different purpose. First, English, losing its direct ethnic identity, serves transnational economic, technical and scientific commerce. It, like artificial languages, denotes rather than connotes. National languages perform both functions. They are not only a functional and a "fundamental democratic prerequisite" (Lepsius 1990, p. 274), but also the precondition for a multidimensional human, individual and collective, existence. Although they developed and stabilized together with nations, and not without a direct state pressures (at least from the days of French Revolution, when for the first time language became an administrative problem; Francis 1976, p. 73), they may well outlast nation states. With an exception of a natural bi- and multilingualism, people of tomorrow may, then, simply be of one and a half language.

Under new conditions, nation states are becoming, step-by-step, challenged by a new actors emerging on the domestic and international scene. The number of them is growing dramatically. Civil societies are reemerging not only in so-called 'new democracies', but also in the classic liberal nation states (Therborn 1995, p. 306-333). Space, occupied not long ago by states, begins to be overcrowded with non-state actors: new social movements, transnational corporations, and international non-governmental organizations. The number, for instance, of the latter grew from 832 in 1951 to 4.615 in 1984 (Held 1988, p. 15, Hobsbawm 1991, p. 174). States react to these trends by establishing consecutive intergovernmental organizations. While the number of them in 1909 had not exceeded 40, in 1951 it grew to 123 and reached 365 in 1984.

Prophecy

Constructing prognoses, these modern prophecies, is a risky venture. Yet, part of the joy of formulating prognoses is that they may fail. But, even so, they still may have some theoretical utility (Holt and Richardson 1970, p. 24).

The gnostic usefulness of prognoses is, for instance, well seen from Roland Robertson's four "images of world order" (1992 p. 404-9). All of them are built on an assumption that "globality is a virtually unavoids problem" for today's societies. And all refer to the problem of nation states. One set of prognoses, called *Global Gemeinschaft I* and *Global Gemeinschaft II*, despite differences between them, foretell annihilation of the nation state phenomenon. Two other, named *Global Gesellschaft I* and *Global Gesellschaft II* assume the preservation of nation state, though in a changed form.

Global Gesellschaft I is quite isomorphic to today's reality. *Global Gesellschaft II* sees the future world or as supranational polity (what seems to be a replica of the nation state, but on a global scale) or as a tight federation

(where nation state, though with limited sovereignty remains as units of one supranational structure).

The vision arising from this paper is closed, but not identical, to Robertson's *Gesellschaft II* image of world order. It envisages that within the European centre a triangular structure composed of regions, nation states and European federation will gradually emerge. Although never free of conflicting interests, these three subjects may have a symbiotic character and become mutually supportive.

The most vital and visible of these three may appear, as structure located below nation state level, regions, and above it, European federal institutions. The importance of the first and the second will grow up on account of the nation state consuming a large part of its constitutive functions.

The re-emergence of regions proves that a decomposition of the nation state has really been taking place. Regions are getting more to say not just because they want too, as they indeed do, but also because states do not have to be unitary any longer. Moreover, an effective region may relieve the state central administration of a lot of burdens. But, at the same time, it seems impossible to make regions a carrier of rights and obligations without limiting the state's competence of power.

Regions, satisfying some grievances of minorities (also ethnic and linguistic), may be seen, too, as a symptom of the reversal of the old power game, under rules where 'bigger' had to be always privileged (Kubiak 1994).

Besides all that in a new structural relations, their position before the state is strengthened by supranational law and institutions. For local people, the majority of whom perform everyday activities within regional confines, region is the 'private fatherland' (Ossowski 1946), where native language is spoken, *paysage* known, styles of life are obvious and folkways obeyed.

In the new emerging Europe, supranational institutions and organizations, more political than their intergovernmental predecessors, will get legitimization directly, from peoples. This legitimization shall endow the federal structure with court, legislative and executive authority.

With the passage of time, the combined space of nation states (already now, according to the Single European Act 1992, is "an area without frontiers, in which the free movement of goods, persons, services and capital is ensured") shall become a frame of the new demotic society: ethnically diversified in regions, like a patchwork, but united by the code of human rights and the federal political system.

This being so, what is left for nation states? Nation states, criticized from so many perspectives and losing so much from their constitutive attributes, will have perform in the triangular structure the role of a political 'shock absorber'. Situated in an economic, social, cultural and infrastructural dilemmas, between regions and Pan-Europe, nation states are expected to act as the factor

assuring equilibrium. The vacuum between regions and Pan-Europe is simply too immense, especially from the point of view of effective system of human rights protection, too dangerous to be left empty. In their new role, nation states will have to absorb conflicts, that regions produce but supranational structures (too heavy and so far away from local scene) cannot deal with.

Double citizenship, all-European and national, as well as shared loyalty seems to be a logical consequence of this new situation.

The triangular structure may also help to keep a dynamic balance between national-regional cultural diversity and homogenizing global pressures. Regional and national institutions and social movements are the natural agents able to uphold this self-correcting mechanism. Yet, cultures of smaller social entities may survive not only due to that institutional protection. They may endure and be able to cope with a changing environment through the everyday experience of people: their symbols, language, institutions and patterns of solving existential problems. Culture simply operates not 'on' us, from outside, but 'in' us. And 'we' are, though the very same genotypically so diversified phenotypically. National and regional cultures are, then, not only abstract systems, but also, or even first of all, the existential reality, reality *hic and nunc*. Globalization may modify the role of regional-national *ecumene*, but not nullify its importance. As long as intergenerational transmission takes place and national languages exist, the global or core culture will have to manifest itself through national-regional scenarios.

The vision presented in this paper remains, using an Anthony Smith's metaphor, "a new continental container for the old wines of national diversity and identity" (1995, p. 64). This may not be very innovative, but, it seems to be quite consistent with processes that have and are taking place.

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