

# State building and nation building

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This essay discusses, from a historical and contemporary perspective, the processes of state and nation building. The difficulties of making every nation a state and every state a nation, and the fact that people live intermingled within the borders of states and have different and often dual identity leads to arguments for multi-national states, states which abandon the dream of becoming nation states and 'nations' willing to live in a multi-national democratic liberal state.

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## The difference between state building and nation building

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It can be said that state building and nation building are two overlapping but conceptually different processes. To the extent that they are overlapping they are largely inseparable but if the overlap is not total (as we well know it is not) they are also different processes.<sup>1</sup>† It is this aspect on which I intend to focus. Both are historical processes, both were initially West European and modern

developments which have spread from the West to the entire world with different, and sometimes very limited, successes elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> They are also processes which have not always been successful and unchallenged on the European scene.

In the European context, state building historically preceded nation building. In fact, in some countries, state building was extensive before nation building became dominant. Some years ago, stimulated by Stein Rokkan, I wrote an essay on Spain entitled, 'Early State Building and Late Peripheral Nationalisms Against the State.'<sup>3</sup> Ideally, at least from some points of view, both processes—either simultaneously or successively—should lead to what we call nation states. However, the full success of that dual process has been largely the exception. We can probably count the true nation states on the fingers of two hands. Living in a world of states, a few of them are true nation states, while others are successful states which, in some cases, are multinational or based on a dominant nation, but are questioned (to a greater or lesser extent) by other nationalisms. And there are nations without a state. If all the potential nations were to develop the distinctive national identity that would lead all of them to a nation building process, which would go on more or less successfully, many of the states in the world would be challenged in their existence.

Faced with that fact, it could be argued—and it has been by those sympathetic to nationalism and who consider self-determination as the highest value—that all nations should aim at building for their culture and identity the 'roof' of statehood.

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† Bendix states the problem very well: 'The terms *state* and *nation* and their cognates *state-building* and *nation-building* are troublesome, but unavoidable. *State* refers to the sphere of highest governmental authority and administration, but that is its modern meaning. In the kingdoms discussed in Part I the ruler possessed the highest authority but controlled only his own domains; as yet no central executive existed. The emergence of the modern state is synonymous with the gradual concentration of administrative functions in the hands of the central government. *Nation* refers to at least two phenomena: (1) an historically developed community with a distinctive culture and language in common; (2) the juxtaposition of the central government and a citizenry which consists of individuals who are equal under the law, a principle of government introduced by the French revolution. Since there are national movements which transcend the boundaries of several states, nation-states with dissident national minorities, states which lack the capacity to appeal to a national community, states in which the French principle of nationhood is practised but in the absence of an historically developed community, and so on, even a careful use of the terms cannot achieve consistency. As an approximation, I shall refer to *states* and *state-building* in the period before 1500 while confining the terms *nation* and *nation-building* (and sometimes *nation-state*) to the period since then.'

Even further, that those people who still do not aspire to a national identity should be awakened and struggle for statehood, that the world should be a world of nations, that no state not identical with a nation should survive and that no nation should be without a state. Unfortunately, as we know, the number of potential nations is many times larger than the present number of nations with or without a state, and infinitely larger than the number of states in the world.

Although we speak of the United Nations of the World, we are really dealing with the united states of the world. The UN, if the trademark US had not been pre-empted by the United States of America, should have been called the US. There are few, particularly among intellectuals, who have taken up the idea that, if possible, we should be engaged in a process of state building (even if that means not building nation states) and that it should be possible to build what has been called 'state nations'; that is, states endowed by their citizens with the loyalty which the nationalists believe only the nation deserves. As we shall see later, this is far from impossible although it might require relinquishing the idea that every state should strive to be a nation state (in the classical sense).

It is from this later perspective, that I intend to raise a number of questions that might be stimulating for future research. It might be argued that state building and nation building can be separated only conceptually but that both processes have gone and are going hand in hand. I would say, however, that in the historical reality of societies these *have been* and *are* distinct processes.

First of all, state building started with the crisis of feudalism, the Renaissance and the Reformation. It was the result of the crisis of the Christian empire and the rivalries between emerging monarchies in Western, and later Northern Europe. The state, as the great historian Burckhardt<sup>4</sup> noted, was 'a work of art' and since its beginnings had an artificial quality. It is no accident that, in describing that process, architectonic terms and images were invoked, and that with the development of modern physics it came to be seen as a machine. The state building process does not have the connotations of an organic growth and it is not seen with a biological imagery that would prevail in the discussion of nationalism. The state not associated with the idea of nature, of being born, but rather of being created. The state building

process goes on for several centuries before the idea of the nation fires the imagination of intellectuals and the people. In fact, it contributed decisively to the slow reduction from the hundreds of political entities we see on a historical map of Europe in 1500, to some 25 by 1900. Until the French Revolution, and the support by the French Republic of republican independence in its periphery and later the support by Napoleon of some nationalist movements, the state building process went on without being based on a national sentiment, identity or consciousness. (The French revolution did not export nationalism since the republics it created in Batavia and Helvetia were an instrument of exploitative armies and the French occupation. If there is a relation between nationalism and the Revolution it is the arousal of counter-revolutionary popular responses, sometime after the failure of the dynastic rulers, politicians and diplomats, to defend the people who take sovereignty into their own hands (as in the Spanish resistance to Napoleon). Nor was the aim of gaining the French 'natural borders' in any way based on our conceptions of the nation but the interests of the French state. Napoleon I, in redrawing the map of Europe did not endeavour to create nation states to be ruled by his brothers and generals but assigned to them old states—kingdoms—like Spain, Naples or created them like Westphalia. However, there can be little doubt that the identification with a state by the subjects, or the loyalty to a common king of people living in the different units comprising the modern monarchies, was accompanied by a proto-national sentiment.<sup>5</sup> Sooner or later, in many of the states, the state generated a 'state nation' building process.

Historically, 'nations' started appearing in the 19th century; mostly in the second half of the century. Only a few serve as a basis for state-building processes: Italy, Germany, Greece and, in a unique way, Hungary within its dual monarchy. Belgium is a particularly interesting case; a state gaining independence from the Netherlands in 1830 (although with a political distinctiveness since the 16th century) might, at some point, have seemed to engage in a nation-building process, but in the 20th century, challenged by Flemish nationalism, it led to a multinational state. Hungarian nationalism is among the strongest of the 19th century, but the crown of St Stephen extends its authority over a multinational state. Historians of

Italy disagree to what extent the Risorgimento and the unification was more a process of state building under the leadership of Cavour than of nation building led by Mazzini and Garibaldi.<sup>6</sup> Although in Germany there was a strong nationalist movement behind the unification process, the German Reich was more the product of the state building by Bismarck than by the nationalists.

Even when the peace treaties after World War I represented a high point of nation building, with the proclamation by Wilson of the principle of self-determination, the new states were not all nation states (Czechs and Slovaks were 64.8% of the population of the new republic, the Germans 23.6%: in Poland the Poles were 69.2%, the Ukrainians 14.3%, the Jews 7.8%, the Germans 3.9% and the Russians 3.9%: in Latvia the titular nationality 73.4 (the Russians 10.3%), in Lithuania 80.1%, in Estonia 87.6%) and certainly the distintegration of four empires into a number of new states and the redrawing of boundaries between states were not directly the result of the efforts of nation-building movements. Of the new states emerging from the Paris peace treaties, or those whose territories were expanded, it is difficult to argue that they were nation-states. Listing them should make it obvious: Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the enlarged Romania, the three Baltic Republics. Only in Finland, was this true where the Swedish minority was a real minority and, in addition, easily developed a loyalty to the new state which, on its part, granted the Swedish speakers extensive rights.

The dominant 'nations' in those new states: Serbs, Czechs, Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, could feel 'liberated,' but not those subjected to them, like the Croats, Slovenians, Sudeten Germans, and the many Slovaks, Germans, Ukrainians and Jews in Poland, or even the different minorities in the Baltic countries. The degree of respect or repression for the minorities varied, and the idea of multinational states was sometimes advocated, although rarely implemented, due to the appeal of the idea of 'nation building.' Indeed, the difficulty faced by the new states was that of successful state building and even more difficult nation building. One could historically analyse how, in a number of cases, the priority given to nation building in the new states contributed to the instability, crisis, and sometimes demise in later decades of those states.<sup>7</sup> Of the

eight new states in Europe after World War I only three: Finland, Czechoslovakia and Ireland were stable democracies compared with nine of the 15 older states and none of the successor states of the three defeated empires.

A question to which we shall turn later is whether the crises of empires and states created in the past was the result of nationalism, or whether nationalism was a result of the crises of those empires and states that had failed in one way or another to make adjustments to modernity, democratization, or failed in the tasks that they had set for themselves. In the case of the Dual Monarchy after the Ausgleich the Emperor and his ministers made reform attempts that would have re-established the Bohemian Kingdom and have Franz Joseph crowned in Prague. The Hungarians and the German nationalists immediately opposed the idea. Earlier, Frantisek Palacký refused to attend the Frankfurt 1848 Vorparlament because he considered himself a member of the Czech nation and not of the German nation, while he said: 'When I look behind the Bohemian frontiers, then natural and historical reasons make me turn not to Frankfurt but to Vienna to seek there the center which is fitted and destined to ensure and defend the peace, the liberty, and the right of my nation.'<sup>8</sup>

Looking at the processes involved in state building and crises of state building might help us to understand better why so many potential nations that we find on the ethnographic and linguistic maps did not succeed, and why in certain historical moments, irrespective of the strength of some of the nationalist movements and identities, new nation states were, or were not, born.

The importance of territorial boundaries created by states irrespective of any ethnographic basis for the building of nations did not change in the second half of the century. African states were created on the basis of colonial boundaries and the complexity of building nations on the homogeneous ethnic, linguistic and tribal basis has led African politicians to agree to defend the inviolability of state boundaries. The new national states presumably being founded now in the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union are based on the substrate divisions inherited from history or designed by Stalin, although these boundaries are leading to endless conflicts. There is agreement on everyone's part, particularly among the international community,

to base the new 'nation states' on sub-units and on 'state' boundaries which are fiercely defended. In spite of the saliency of the idea of the nation, the reality of statehood, old or new, is still dominant. The question is, can we build states without the ambition that they should also be nation states and generate the kind of identification that makes democracy possible within those states, in spite of the checkered map of nations.†

Let us now turn briefly to a discussion of the state as a starting point for analysis of state building in an effort to highlight some of the differences with nation building. Let us remember the definition of the state, by Max Weber:<sup>9</sup> 'A compulsory political organization with continuous operations will be called a state in so far as its administrative staff successfully uphold the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of force in the enforcement of its order' and his subsequent statement, 'It, the state, possesses an administrative and legal order subject to change by legislation to which the organized activities of the administrative staff, which are also controlled by legislation, are oriented', referring to the modern state based on legal rational domination.

Or to take a more recent formulation, that of

Charles Tilly:<sup>10</sup>

'An organization which controls the population occupying a definite territory is a state in so far as; (1) it is differentiated from other organizations operating in the same territory; (2) it is autonomous; (3) it is centralized and (4) its divisions are formally coordinated with one another.'

The state involves a system of roles, a series of rules and access to certain resources. Those roles involve a series of offices which have become highly differentiated and structured in modern bureaucracies, armies, courts of justice, legislatures, etc. In the modern state the actions of officials are bound more or less by rules, constitutions, laws, customs and, in the past, traditions. In fact, the ruler in a modern state, in principle, is himself bound by those rules although originally he was sovereign, that is, *legibus solutus*. The state, in principle, has the monopoly of legitimate violence. Violence, which is bound by rules, is therefore different from violence by individuals and, as such, allows the state apparatus to enforce its rules by coercion. The state also enjoys economic resources thanks to the capacity to exact taxes. The state exercises its control over the people, subjects, citizens and even foreigners living in its territory. It has the power to enact laws and binding rules, which it can enforce through its courts and its coercive agents. Those laws might be considered just or unjust but even in the late case can still be enforced. With progress in state building, the idea of the *Rechtsstaat*, a state bound by law and excluding arbitrary decisions not based on rules, has become the norm. With the more recent process of democratization the notion of citizenship characterizes the modern state, granting those who are not foreigners rights in the polity and imposing on them duties.<sup>11</sup>

Not all the states fit into this ideal model. There are states which do not enjoy the monopoly of legitimate violence—when it is challenged by the guerrilla leaders that control part of the territory, or fascist squadristi in Italy after World War I, for example. Some states are almost unable to collect adequate taxes. Officials might exercise their power not for the collective purposes but mainly for their own personal benefit. The laws it enacts may be largely disregarded. There are, therefore,

† The compatibility of state and nation without becoming a nation state naturally concerned the Austrians after the founding of the German empire. The work by Ignaz Seipel (1916) *Nation und Staat*, Wilhelm Braunmüller, Vienna, argued that cultural nationalism did not imply political nationalism and advocated a liberalized multinational state.

It is interesting to note that at the turn of the 19th century politicians in Vienna, like prime ministers Taaffe and Baron Beck, saw democratization as a way to divert politics from nationalist strife to fruitful social reforms. The introduction of manhood suffrage in 1906 by prime minister Baron Beck with the support of Emperor Franz Joseph led to a decrease of the Nationalist votes and an increase in strength of Socialist, Christian Social and Agrarian parties. In 1908 Edward Beneš, later the co-founder and president of Czechoslovakia, wrote that the breakup of Austria-Hungary was not inevitable. In *Le problème Autrichien et la question Tchèque* (1908) he said: 'People have often spoken of a dismemberment of Austria. I do not believe in it at all. The historical and economic bonds between the Austrian nations are too powerful to make such a dismemberment possible. The introduction of the general franchise and the democratization of Austria, especially of Bohemia, prepare the soil for national appeasement.'

It was not so much the nationalism of the 'little,' the oppressed nations, but intransigence of the dominant nationalities the Germans and the Hungarians, and their nation-building efforts, that contributed most to the crisis of the imperial political system.

levels of stateness and states in the process of breakdown.

Let us emphasize that there are states that pursue desirable collective goals and contribute to the welfare of their citizens and that there are also oppressive and evil states ready to sacrifice their citizens either to some utopian goal set by the rulers or to personal interests. The totalitarian states and the sultanistic regimes are evidence of this.<sup>12</sup>

States are characterized by being artificial creations, having considerable impersonality and by enforcing uniformities in a society. The modern state has, in its liberal democratic form, achieved credit in moderating violence, including the reduction of private violence, the creation of space for the development of the individual by recognizing basic rights, the protection of property and all the conditions that have made the modern market economy possible. There is also an extensive debit side to the modern state, particularly in some regimes.<sup>13</sup>

The people living within the boundaries of a state are bound by a common rule of law and subject to one and the same sovereign body, irrespective of their culture, language, religion and subjective identification with that sovereign body. Still, Abbé Sieyès used some of that same formulation, starting with the expression a 'union of people bound by a common rule of law', to define the nation.<sup>14</sup> The modern state is based on citizenship, implying rights and duties, including a certain loyalty—but not always a strong emotional identification, language, religion, or set of values, etc. Certainly, however, people in states which are fully nation states additionally share all or some of those characteristics.

In contrast, a nation, as Weber writes: 'means above all that it is proper to expect from certain groups a specific sentiment of solidarity in the face of other groups';<sup>15</sup> thus, the concept belongs to the sphere of values. As he also notes, there is no agreement on how these groups should be delimited or about what concerted action should result from such solidarity. In ordinary language a nation is not necessarily identical with the people of the state, that is, with the membership in a given polity.

That does not mean that it cannot be identical, but it does not have to be. The situation before the recent German unification illustrates the difference quite clearly. There were two states,

although there was a claim shared by many people, and finally expressed in the breakdown of the DDR and in the expression *Wir sind ein Volk*, that there was a German nation divided between two states.<sup>16</sup>

Let us now turn to some of the more significant differences between states and nations. A nation does not have officials, and there are no defined roles, although there are individuals who act as carriers in the Weberian sense 'Träger' of the national sentiment, movement, leaders of nationalistic organizations, etc. There are no clear rules about membership in a nation and there are no defined rights and duties that can be legitimately enforced, although nationalists certainly enforce behaviour on the part of those who identify with the nation or who they claim should identify with it. However, without control of the state, without establishing a national state or without the delegation of a non-national state, these behaviours cannot be legally or even legitimately enforced. A nation does not have resources like coercive powers or taxes to demand obedience, only the nation state or the state supporting the aspirations of a nation can enforce behaviour, and provide resources to achieve national goals.

It can be argued that a nation crystallizing out of a national movement, even if it does not control a state, can exercise power, use violence, exact contributions without having yet gained statehood. But in a world system of states this means that the movement is taking over some of the functions of the state, subverting its order, and that the state is breaking down in the process. Nationalists can create private armies to enforce their aspirations and challenge the authority of the state, which in some cases can lose control over a territory and cannot coercively implement its decisions. In that case we are facing a situation of civil war, or a national liberation struggle which might end in the creation of a new state. In the process, however, people lose many of the positive aspects that can be associated with a modern and particularly a liberal democratic state. In fact, that challenge to the state by nationalists almost inevitably involves a very large degree of arbitrary power, violence and absence of a predictable legal order. However, we should not identify nations with those nationalist movements which result from a nationalist sentiment. The nation, as such, does not have any organizational characteristics comparable with those of the state. It has no autonomy, no agents,

no rules but only the resources derived from the psychological identification of the people that constitute it. A state can exist on the basis of external conformity with its rules. A nation requires some internal identification.

We all live under the jurisdiction of a state. There is no space in the world free from the authority, or the claim to authority, of a state. With the exception of a few stateless peoples, originally defined by the League of Nations, and holding the so-called Nansen passport, everybody is a citizen or subject of a state—but there are probably millions which have no consciousness of being members of a particular nation. If asked, they might be able to say in which country they live but be unable to think in terms of a nation. Many of those who, by the criteria of ethnologists, linguists, political scientists and the leaders of nationalist movements, should be considered members of a particular nation do not feel that way and, in fact, might have no such identity or, they might even, perhaps, identify with another nation.

Nationalist ideologists like the Catalan, Prat de la Riba were sensitive to the difference between state and nation. He wrote:

‘The state remained fundamentally differentiated from the nation because the state was a political organization, a power independent externally, supreme in the interior with material force of men and monies to maintain its independence and authority.’

Contrast this with a nation, defined as a:

‘Live, organic, natural entity. It existed in face of the laws that did not recognize it and by the fact of being natural it distinguished itself clearly from the artificial creations of man, among them, fundamentally the state.<sup>17</sup>’

The Capucine monk Evangelista de Ibero in 1906, in a nationalist catechism for the Basques, expressed the same feeling in more emotional language.<sup>18</sup> He wrote: ‘The nation is something natural, that is something created by nature itself; the state is something artificial dependent on human will.’ For a more extensive quote see Reference 3.

Nationalist thinkers constantly emphasize the natural rather than artificial character of the nation.

If we think about it, however, the nation results from the development of a culture, and an identity based on it is as much an artificial creation as a state.

State building and nation building, therefore, are both works of art, results of conscious efforts by leaders. The question then, is to analyse better the difficulties and successes in both processes and the degree to which they are complementary or in conflict. The task of building successful states is far from easy but the building of nations, particularly simultaneously with state building, may probably be even more difficult. Paradoxically, the building of nations when the state is in crisis or undergoing a breakdown is much easier. In fact, in the absence of a complex and structured civil society, nation building—in some senses of the term—is particularly easy. The building of states supposes a somewhat complex civil society. It requires, for example, a legal culture which depends on the quality of legal scholarship in the universities, and without it, it is almost impossible to create the minimally efficient bureaucracy which the modern state requires. It demands a productive and largely monetary economy to be able to collect taxes. These considerations will be very important for a discussion of the developments in the former Soviet Union where we find the state in crisis or in the process of breakdown, a delegitimacy of the party that took the place of the state, and a weak civil society. In such a context, the building of a nation seems an easy way out of the crisis.<sup>19</sup> From this perspective it is understandable that nationalism should have become so powerful, or at least relatively powerful, in the present crisis.

In a number of European countries, the process of state building went on for centuries on the basis of the more successful mediaeval monarchies through the period of estates, the absolute monarchies, and (after the French revolution) constitutional monarchies, and finally the process of democratization. This long process was the result of dynastic wars and marriages, adding or losing territories in the process and creating the state for the different crown lands under the same king—lands which later came under a central royal authority and bureaucracy and, in the constitutional monarchies, under a central legislature. The process led to the building of an army with more or less success, a single system of taxation and treasury, growing legal uniformity, clear definition of borders, and finally the transition from subjects

to citizens of the state. For a long time there was little effort to impose a common culture and even less a common language, although the *cujus regio ejus religio* (except in the mixed countries which accepted the idea of toleration, at least for some religious diversity) created a basic common value system. The allegiance of noblemen, clergymen and, even more, the common people was to a ruler. When this ruler lost or gained a territory most of the people shifted their allegiance without too much difficulty. In fact, many noblemen chose the king they were ready to serve irrespective of their origin. Preradovich, in his study of the elites of the Austro-Hungarian Empire has shown the heterogeneous origin of its ruling aristocracy.<sup>20</sup>

The monarchies of Western Europe whose boundaries were defined relatively early, Portugal, Spain, England and Wales, Scotland, France and, to a lesser extent, the Nordic monarchies, generated among their officials and subjects a sense of identity and pride which we might call proto-nationalistic. That sentiment also existed with the component kingdoms and territories but was not based on a common language. When that sentiment came closer to what we could call today a nation is difficult to define. It certainly happened after the French Revolution, in some cases as a result of the expansion of Jacobin republicanism, in others due to the resistance to Napoleon.

With the process of defining egalitarian citizenship and incipient democratization those states became increasingly nation states. Republicanism was undoubtedly associated with the emergence of nationalism but we should not forget that there were very few republics in Europe before the 20th century. The processes of unification of the language used in the courts and administration (for reasons of efficiency) sometimes even anticipated the enactment of rules. There was a natural expansion of the use of the most successful variants of the literary language, but until the late 19th century, those changes were not part of a deliberate nation building process. A slow and largely unplanned process of nation building took place in those Western European states.

It could be argued that the state builders, if they had been more aware of the implications of nation building, could have carried the process much further before the 20th century. Western Europe is therefore a world of states which became, more or less, successful nation states before the ideas

associated with nation building became dominant. As a consequence, in spite of the emergence of peripheral nationalisms in Spain, France, the United Kingdom (with the exception of Ireland), these states have continued being a powerful social reality to this day. Indeed, in Spain, when the crisis of the Franco regime led to a questioning of Spanish nationalism and the eruption of intense nationalism in its periphery, almost all the leaders of the nationalist movements, in order to avoid the word Spain, talked about 'that state' or the *Estado español*. They rejected, more or less intensely or rhetorically, the Spanish nation but not the Spanish state.

The 19th century appears as the time of nation building and of the dream of nation building among the oppressed nationalities. But a more careful look at the events leads to a somewhat different perspective. It is no accident that after Italian unification, Massimo D'Azeglio, the Piedmontese liberal politician in 1860 would say: 'Italy is made, now we must make Italians,' suggesting that the state building had been achieved, using largely traditional methods, and that the task of nation building was still pending. Although nationalism was strong in Germany since the early part of the 19th century, the German confederation created by Bismarck was part of a state building process under the leadership of Prussia, whose elites were, to a large extent, ambivalent about a nation building process that threatened them with democratization of the state.<sup>21</sup> After unification, nationalism and efforts of nation building became stronger and stronger, but the second Reich did not fully do away with cultural linguistic diversity nor with the representation in the Reichstag of minority nationalities.

In fact, the rise of Pan-Germanism in Austria and, to some extent, in Germany was based on hostility to a state that did not want to pursue the radical nation building process. It is no accident that Hitler in *Mein Kampf* should express his hostility to the German *Staatsgläubigkeit*.<sup>22</sup>

It was the existence of core states, Prussia and Piedmont, with their bureaucrats, diplomats and military officers, that made possible nation building by intellectuals, professors, teachers, economists and businessmen advocating protectionism, and so developed nation building, which later led to extreme nationalism.

The situation was very different for the 'little

people' in eastern and southeastern Europe under the domination of the dual monarchy and Czarist Empire. There, different groups throughout different phases (so well described by Miroslav Hroch<sup>23</sup>) undertook the task of nation building outside and against the state. This was the case of the Czechs, Lithuanians, Estonians, Slovaks and the Flemish. The initial 'carriers'—Träger—of the national idea did not think of the possibility of building a state, and only slowly did the dream of statehood become central. The case was somewhat different in Norway where a quasi-state allowed the breaking of the union with Sweden in 1905. Even in the Grand Duchy of Finland, its quasi-state institutions could be used for the purpose of nation building without challenging the Czarist state, except when the Czars turned to a policy of Russification. Only the defeat in World War I of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the crisis generated by the 1917 revolutions in Russia made the building of new nation states possible. The disintegration of the Czarist empire in addition to the full independence of Finland, of the three Baltic republics, the unity of Poland and the incorporation of Bessarabia into Rumania, led to a number of cases of incipient statehood from 1 to 3 or 4 years; that is, Bukhara, Khiva, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaidzhan and the Ukraine. A number attained statehood for less than one year: Belorussia, the Crimea, Bashkiria, the Volga Tatar region and Kazakh-Kirgiz Steppe.<sup>24</sup> The success of that effort largely depended on international factors outside of the area and, indirectly, on the western concern about the Bolshevik Revolution. In a number of cases, the nation and the nationalist movement were weak and the Soviets could regain central control, even when making some concessions to the emerging nations, some of which were soon withdrawn in practice. The borders of those new states were largely uncertain and did not necessarily correspond to the ethnic linguistic borders. Their populations were largely multi-national and multi-lingual making for irredentism of neighbouring nations and states. The result was a strong commitment to nation building which contributed to the instability of those states. The nation building effort made the loyalty of large numbers of citizens in those societies doubtful and later contributed to their disintegration or vulnerability, for example the cases of Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Serbian dominated Yugoslavia.

We are now living in a period seen by some as one in which nationalisms are breaking up the Yugoslav and the Soviet states. But we tend to forget that the new independent states are, in many cases, the result of the action of the incumbents of state power, attempting to mobilize a sentiment of nationhood while, at the same time, holding on to the state structure (and sometimes also the offices they already have) and defending the state boundaries irrespective of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural borders. The Baltic states are to some extent an exception to this. The question to be answered in the near future is if a process of democratic state building will be undertaken incorporating all those living in the territories of the former Soviet republics, now independent states, or if the emphasis on nation building will make the living together of people of different backgrounds and cultural identities impossible.

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### Difficulties in nation building: difficulties in state building

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The starting point of our discussion will be that, contrary to the simplifications of the defenders of self-determination (the right of every nation to become a state, or the natural primordial character of nations) the building of nations in most parts of the world is difficult and sometimes extremely costly in human well-being. In addition, I will argue that it is not always necessary to protect or to achieve the cultural diversity that we value. I shall also argue that, in the 20th century, in contrast to the 19th century it is increasingly difficult to make every existing state a nation state. In fact, that effort might contribute to make, in many parts of the world, the process of state building shaky if not impossible.

Should we be able to prove those two arguments, the task would be to show that we can have legitimate democratic states that are not, strictly speaking, nation states, and where the state might receive some of the loyalty and emotional support that some argue only nations can achieve.

On the other hand, we shall argue that those who identify with a nation do not have to build nation states if multinational states can offer a 'roof' to their culture and identity without

pursuing the exclusiveness identified with the traditional nation-state building process. We shall encounter some trouble in our analysis because we need a new terminology that will distinguish nations within a state without the aspiration to become nation states, and states that will be endowed with some of the characteristics of a nation state without proceeding to a policy of nation building. States, which we could call 'state-nations', would be multinational or at least multicultural. But we are getting ahead of our argument and, before developing it, we have to look at some basic facts that are frequently ignored in the intellectual (and even more so in the political) debate on nationalism.

Contrary to the nationalist ideologies, nations are not a natural phenomenon which arises to claim statehood at the touch of a magic wand. This point has been made strongly by Ernst Gellner<sup>25</sup> and is supported indirectly by the solid research of Hroch on the enormous effort and time that it has taken to awaken the nationalist sentiment of the smaller groups of people, and by the failure to arouse nationalism and, even more, the claims to any secessionist struggle, in the nations within the established solid states of the advanced west.

There is evidence that primordialism, in the sense of Clifford Geertz and Edward Shils, does not translate easily into 'nation nationalism,' although it might into a 'nation identity.'<sup>26</sup> In fact, I have analysed contemporary Spain and the French Basque country and been able to show that the primordial identity based on language and descent can be strong, but without generating an exclusive national identity and, even less, a demand for the building of a nation state. It seems more as if the extreme nationalists had attempted to abandon the primordial markers as a basis of national identity in order to claim a territorial basis, which would include those not sharing those primordial characteristics. A shift that transforms the national identity into a voluntary choice irrespective of primordial characteristics implies a rejection by the nationalists of those who, while sharing the primordial marks, do not support the nationalist movement. Nationalism is not just a translation into politics of distinctive primordial characteristics, a point that has been made, for example in Max Weber's<sup>27</sup> excellent page on nationalism. Ideologists tend to ignore this when they talk about the number of speakers of the language or members

of the religion that serves as a basis for a nationalist movement, without any inquiry into how many perceive that characteristic as a basis for the building of a nation and, even more, of a nation state. On the other hand, the nationalists, in making their claim, often count all the people in a particular territory as members of the nation claiming to become a state, irrespective of their sharing the primordial characteristics or even the wish to achieve nationhood and a nation state. The analysis of all these facts (which has not been made in most countries where there is a nationalist conflict and which cannot be studied once the conflict erupts) would seriously deflate the claims made in the name of nationalism.

Another problem that both social scientists and politicians ignore is that identities in the modern world are not exclusive. People do not identify either as Catalan or Spanish, although if forced to that dichotomy, might, more or less reluctantly, have to say they are one or the other. People are capable of having multiple identities. In fact, there is evidence that they may feel equally strongly towards two presumed national identities, that they might consider themselves equally Catalan and Spanish, Slovak and Czechoslovak, and perhaps Croatian and Yugoslav if allowed to express such a dual identity. Obviously, some of them might feel one or the other more strongly and the nationalists have a task to generate a polar choice between being one or the other and weaken (by conversion or by generating a violent conflict in which there is no choice) the support of those who would like to see a society based on more than one identity. It is that dual identity that makes possible the survival or the building of multi-national states. This is a complexity which I could document at length as I have already done.<sup>28,29,30</sup> (In 1982, in Catalonia, 32% identified as either Spanish or more Spanish than Catalan, 40% as equally Spanish as Catalan, 17% more Catalan than Spanish and 9% Catalan. Among those whose two parents were born in Catalonia the proportions were respectively 11%, 48%, 26.5%, and 14% and among the sons and daughters of two immigrant parents 34%, 37.5%, 12%, and 11%, and the immigrants themselves 64%, 26%, 4% and 2%.) This is an inconvenient fact to all nationalists. There are those who claim that the state is a nation state and demand complete identification with it and the dominant nationality in it, and those who claim

that their nation exists and is incompatible with any larger and different identity. Fortunately, there are also politicians who accept this basic fact and build their political programme on the basis of the compatibility of two identities, that of a state-nation and that of a nation that does not aspire to nation statehood—although in our world they occasionally slip into the nationalist demand of creating a separate nation state.

Indeed, it is perfectly possible to conceive of a society in which people would have more than two identities. They would feel that they are, to a greater or lesser extent, members of a nation, members of a state-nation or just state, and members of a larger community like Europe, and that these three identities have different implications for the lives. Different identities which are fundamentally compatible and valuable to them.

When asked: to what extent are you proud of being a Spaniard? (with four responses), in Catalonia 33% said 'very proud' and 40% 'fairly proud' (compared to a Spanish average of 45% and 40% respectively). When asked the same question about being Catalan, 36% 'very proud' and 48% 'fairly proud.' This means that a large number of respondents must be proud of both identities and that a number of immigrants from other parts of Spain feel proud to be Catalans (given the fact that they are over 30% of the population.)<sup>31</sup>

In view of these facts, we can talk about a deliberate crafting of nations and states and a deliberate crafting of the destruction of nations and states.<sup>32</sup> The first two processes require a constructive moderate leadership that realizes the complexities of social reality and does not think in zero sum terms. The second inevitably involves conflict, and often violence and oppression, either in the name of the state or the nation that wants to gain statehood. In some cases, it is the state that wants to destroy an existing primordial identity (which some conceive as a nation) by a policy of denationalization, cultural repression and, if necessary, the use of the coercive resources of the state. In others, the crafting of destruction of the complex bonds existing in a complex multi-cultural society is made in the name of the nation. The success of these policies ultimately depends on the readiness to use force and the international context which allows that use of force or gives its support to one or another side in the conflict by recognizing its legitimate use of force. After such a conflict,

the construction of a civilized society in which people of different identities and degrees of identification with a nation can live together in a state becomes difficult, if not impossible. Exodus and refugees are the outcome of such a process.

Our idea of crafting implies that such an outcome is by no means necessary and puts us, as social scientists, on the spot of thinking much more about how it can be avoided. Unfortunately, many of the social scientists who deal with these problems, particularly in societies that do not face such conflicts, have simplistic views about the right of self-determination and the right or morality of secession, and feel emotional sympathies with those who, in fact or in their view, have been oppressed.<sup>33</sup> Nation building against the state or by a state in the 20th century could be the source of terrible conflicts.

It could be argued that the existing states which have achieved nation statehood, or at least became state nations, were successful in that endeavour in the 19th century. Remember an outstanding monograph by Eugene Weber *From Peasants into Frenchmen* on how the French state, inspired by the Jacobin idea of the *nation unie et indivisible*, succeeded in overcoming the cultural and linguistic heterogeneity of France.<sup>34</sup> The purposeful process of nation building by the French state was an incredible success, which contrasts with the more limited success of the Spanish 19th century liberal centralist state in the same endeavour, although we should not ignore how far Spain and the Spanish state succeeded in its effort to create a Spanish identity over the centuries, particularly in the first 75 years of the 19th century. From today's perspective those endeavours of modern states appear as far from admirable and represent a cost that many of us would not like to pay.

However, it is not just a question of how we evaluate such efforts of state-based nation building but how feasible they are in the contemporary context. Our answer on the basis of a sociological analysis is that, independent of the desirability of such a process (which involves a value judgement), such an effort is today doomed to failure in most societies, and certainly in liberal democratic societies. We could go into an analysis of why this is so, but we have to limit ourselves to a few points.

In the modern world, even in the less developed peripheral or marginal ethnic cultural linguistic

minorities, every society produces an intellectual elite which, for emotional reasons and (let us not forget) self-interest, will defend the primordial values and characteristics. Such elites did not exist, as Gellner has rightly stressed, in an agrarian pre-industrial society. Today they exist even in such agrarian societies.

Although I do not share the emphasis, in the literature on nationalism, on the role of intellectuals, artists and writers in articulating nationalism as the only or dominant factor, since even such elites might fail in their efforts, they constitute an important factor. Today, they enjoy the availability of a broad and diffuse ideological legacy as a basis on which to argue their case. We should not think that only well-developed rationalized ideologies appeal to intellectuals. We have seen enough cases in which ideology, unstructured, unelaborated, could appeal to sentiments and emotions of otherwise highly rational people. The principles of nationalism can be applied in any society—they are available now in a way they were not before the 19th and 20th century. Powerful ideologies, like communism or fascism in the recent past, find support in an international climate of opinion created and shared by people who know little or nothing about the societies in which the ideology of nationalism is being implemented, and which are often in conflict with their own liberal and progressive values. Let us not be fooled with the talk about the end of ideology in the world. In the vacuum left by the demise of many other ideologies, the one of nationalism is more powerful than ever.

In addition, those intellectual elites have a ready-made audience in a literate society and in a society which is open to a wide range of mass media that did not exist in earlier times. In that context, an educational and cultural policy like that of the French Third Republic is difficult to conceive.

We are living in an era in which the liberal democratic principles of legitimacy, the institutions of the Rechtsstaat, are being loudly proclaimed by everyone, even when they might be constantly violated. That legitimacy formula makes it impossible in many countries needing the respect of the world community to pursue oppressive and discriminatory policies against those asserting primordial identities, cultural and linguistic rights, and also the articulation of nationalist sentiments, even of extreme nationalists. This is a reality that

modern states cannot ignore except by turning to authoritarianism, a choice that often is also not legitimate for those who do not share a sympathy with, or tolerance for, the nationalists questioning the idea of nation-state building by the state.

In this context, it is necessary to turn to different and new methods of state integration other than those based on nation building. However, not everything in the development of modern literate industrial and even tertiary economy societies works in favour of nationalists questioning the state. We should not forget the market and with it the need for larger economic spaces and free movement of persons and capital as a great integrator within states that still have some economic boundaries with other states. Although, as Gellner has stressed, language becomes an essential resource and basis for power and opportunity in modern industrial societies and, therefore, demands for recognition of previously parochial languages are growing: the more important and widely used languages represent an asset in the wider market economy. There is the temptation of using an international *lingua franca* like English rather than the language of the larger state or culture area and its standard. The temptation is to use English in international business transactions and Swiss-German in the daily life of the society rather than standard German. However, we should not be too optimistic that rational economic considerations in favour of larger political units will always prevail. Certainly, in Yugoslavia in 1991 nobody was so concerned about the tourist market as to postpone the nationalistic conflicts until after the summer. One of the problems in the break-up of the Soviet Union into presumably new nation states is that although the planned economy generated economic ties across the republic boundaries, the idea of a common Soviet market and its value to the member republics probably was not, and is not, part of their calculations. One of the costs of the new nationalism might be the difficulty in creating wider markets and thereby economic development. In that context the idea of joining the European Common Market as an alternative to state-wide larger markets creates a new and very often false illusion for the new nationalist states.

I could go on arguing about the difficulty, today, of using state power to create a Jacobin-type of nation states, as I could have gone more

extensively into the arguments of why, in multicultural societies (particularly when the territorial basis of primordial and national characteristics is far from homogeneous and well defined) the peaceful building of nations is difficult, particularly in the short term. All this accounts for the violence associated with the efforts of nation building either by the state from above, or by the people and the activists of nationalism from below.

Some would like to argue that democracy offers an answer to the problem, particularly after its success in weakening and channelling class conflict, which only a few decades ago seemed so destructive in modern industrial societies. I think that democracy can contribute to solve these problems, but only by largely giving up the identification of democratic processes with undisputed majority rule. What is more debatable is that the identification of plebiscitarianism with democracy, the use of voting to decide aspirations of self-determination will avoid the problems we have raised. If we assume that there are multiple identities of different intensity in our societies, that within any territorial unit there are both majorities and minorities in terms of cultural identities, the plebiscitarian principle applied to self-determination introduces a zero-sum choice which does not correspond to the complex social and cultural reality of many societies. Already, at the Versailles Peace Conference, idealist advocates of self-determination of nations encountered the problem that to let the people decide was not workable since 'first one had to decide who the people were to be called on to decide, and that decision largely pre-empted the outcome and was not necessarily acceptable to all the people called to decide.' Sir Ivor Jennings in *The Approach to Self-Government* formulated it very well: 'On the surface it seemed reasonable: let the people decide. It was in fact ridiculous because the people cannot decide until somebody decides who are the people.'<sup>35</sup> For the democrat it seems easy to say 'let the people decide', but that is true only at the level of abstract principles, and enormously complex in reality. Social scientists have the obligation to study that complexity. Public opinion research intelligently used can be an important instrument in that process while if badly used can contribute to simplification. In my own work I have tried to reveal the complexity of the national phenomenon by asking questions which go beyond

a simple dualism, allowing people to express their dual identities when confronted with the choice of 'nationality.'

The paradox of nation building is that after the process of awakening or creating a national consciousness, creating cultural institutions, standardizing the language, organizing a nationalist movement, demonstrating for statehood, and so on, the moment comes for the leadership to opt for pressing the issue either by institutional and peaceful means or by violence, the creation of militias and, if the state is strong enough, even terrorist acts. At that point nation builders are likely to split, unless the state is disintegrating or the nationalists receive international support, and some will opt for working within the political system. This option is most immediate when a transition to democracy takes place in a formerly authoritarian regime that repressed the nationalists' aspirations.

In the transition to democracy, there are two possibilities. If there are already autonomous sub-government institutions, fictitious or real in the authoritarian setting, even if they have not supported democracy before, the incumbents are likely to choose to appeal to the national identity against the weak or crumbling centre. Unless a legitimate democratic central authority and a representative body are created soon to negotiate a new compact within the limits of the state, which requires state-wide elections to precede elections at the sub-unit level, the option will be demands for independence.<sup>19</sup> In that situation the incumbents are likely to transform the sub-unit of the larger state into a new state and initiate a process of state building and nation building. They will sooner or later encounter the great problems derived from the difficulties of nation building, and the new states might be overwhelmed by those difficulties. This is likely to be the pattern in the former Soviet republics and territories, compounded in this case by the fact that the incumbents who have become nationalists have little understanding of what democratic institutions and liberalist means.

When the transition takes place, as it did in Spain, without disintegration of the state because it was possible to make a distinction between the regime and the state, and when it is initiated by the regime leading to the formula of *reforma pactada-ruptura pactada*, the nationalists will face

the problem of participating in the elections or to refuse any participation in the existing state. The strategies to be followed—participation with a continuing demand for independence, gaining representation to negotiate a new state compact providing for either secession or autonomy and federal or confederal institutions—are likely to divide the nationalist movement. The nationalist movement, when it has no prospect of sharing power within a democratic framework, can easily retain its unity and its radical positions. With democracy, it is likely to split between those who want to continue the struggle for independence sometimes supporting violence and a terrorist movement, and those who want to participate in the system to make the maximum possible gains for the nation building process.

The latter, in turn, are likely to split between those who would like to advance that process rapidly and who after participating in the electoral process and the institutions of the state, like the legislature, are ready to continue the process of negotiation and pressure for independence, and those who, once certain new constitutional arrangements have been achieved, will be putting off the nationalist's goals *ad calendas graecas*. The latter, without giving up the nationalist dreams, are ready to participate in governing the territory, the sub-unit recognized by the state as belonging to the nation. There are those who will continue a principled but peaceful opposition within the democratic institutions and those who, unable to achieve their goals democratically, will opt for other means.

What the nationalist movement and the political parties that will represent it in a democratic context face is the alternative of continuing the process of nation building within a non-national state or to continue the fight without making any immediate gains. Only if the nationalist movement represents a majority in a territorially significant sub-unit, and if it does not split on the tactics to be pursued, will the state face a crisis that it might not be able to resolve, except by the use of force. In the context of our time, the use of force against a large democratically represented majority will delegitimize the state and is likely in many cases to end in the break-up of the state. In the case that the nationalist movement has split between extremists and various shades of moderates, the assertion of the nation by its leaders might end in a compromise

in which the nation-building goals would be pursued within the context of a state, which in the process might have become democratically legitimate. This latter outcome is possible and likely when there are large segments in the population that share a dual national identity. The appeal to that dual identity will make possible new formulas of democratic state building. It is, in my view, a fluid situation, one in which much depends on the choices made by the leadership of the national movement and of the representatives of the state. Much depends also on the support for those turning to violence and their success or failure in generating the spiral of terrorism, repression, reinforced terrorism and, consequently, repression leading to a broadly based confrontation. The Spanish experience in the Basque country is interesting from this point of view.

In this context, leadership becomes decisive. In a transition, demands and rhetoric can escalate rapidly in confrontation, destroying moderation and the ability to negotiate to peaceful and democratic solutions. The building of a new type of democratic liberal state that incorporates the nation that challenged its former centralized nation state conception might generate a new state-nation compatible with nations under its rule. A democratic, multinational, multicultural, multi-lingual state is possible.

However, this does not mean that there will not be continuous conflicts and that the arrangements reached during the transition, the constitution making process, the delimitation of competences between the central and the regional autonomous governments will not be subject to continuous debate and probably revisions over time. A democratic liberal constitutional state with instruments like a constitutional court to resolve those conflicts, the participation in power at the periphery or preferably even at the centre of the nationalists, their success in pursuing some of their goals, might make possible a new type of state. The Spanish experience of the *Estado de las Autonomías* has been a surprising, and in many ways an unexpected, success of such a process.\* The failure

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\* I have wondered sometimes why the memory of the Spanish civil war was used by everybody, constructively, to say 'never again' and achieve a peaceful transition after Franco, and why the memory of civil war bloodshed in Yugoslavia did not lead politicians to such a response. Perhaps the difference is that

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of undertaking such a road is exemplified by the case of Yugoslavia. The comparison of the way in which the political system was able to process the nationalist demands in both cases would be illuminating for our subject. The building of multi-national states is complicated but not impossible if the two dominant ideas (that every state should strive to become a nation state and that every nation should aspire to become a state) are abandoned. As Francesc Cambó the great Catalan leader and politician reminds us<sup>36</sup> it is complicated, as everything is in life, but it may save us from the great 'terribles simplificateurs.'<sup>37</sup>

ideological and class conflicts do not leave a permanent mark on the following generation that can change their ideas and move them socially upward or geographically without carrying with them an identity, as in the case of ethnicity, language, or religion. An identity that might allow leaders to arouse more easily ancient hatreds and memories than what happened three decades ago when brothers—in some cases literally—fought on opposite sides in the Spanish civil war.

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