ABHANDLUNGEN / ARTICLES

Old nationalism instruments for new local citizenships:
a local reaction to global pressure

By *Michele Di Benedetto*, Brescia*

A.   Introduction

Whatever might be said about the nation, about nationalism and about its complementary political institutions, it is obvious that they have been successful at any level, for the last four centuries. They have dominated the political scene and the political debate. The nation-state has become by the 19th century, the dominant single model of modernity and the nation appeared as the most natural organizing principle of humanity. A principle somehow uncontested even in the middle of the Cold War ideological struggle.

According to a Marxist-indebted reading, the nation-state would establish itself as a necessity for the 18th century European emerging class: the bourgeoisie. Seemingly the nation-state established as the only possible organizing principle for the highly differentiated societies originated by the industrial revolution. In Etienne Balibar's view the efforts of the middle class forged the new system in the post industrial revolution era on the basis of a necessity of alliance with and exploitation of its labour force, the rural masses (the *in fieri* working class).[1] Even without fully subscribing to Balibar's (and Wallerstein's) position, it is fascinating to consider how well this reading may adapt to the process of structuring of national communities and how it can exemplify many aspects of the globalization processes displaying their effects in present days. According to this approach, social changes that formed the basis of the structuring of nation-states were pushed forward by the contemporary need of a free labour force, to be found within rural workers, and the need of markets absorbing the produced goods. So a nation-state "container", by its characteristics, became the most natural output, providing a set of symbolic justifications to a class-based resource subdivision and the background ideal for social cohesion.

In pre-modern societies in general, individuals have participated, and do participate, as members of a specific component of society. Membership would be defined by ascribed categories such as occupation, kinship, status, etc…; generally a *caste* would provide an

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*   *Michele Di Benedetto*, Lecturer and freelance consultant at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy University of Urbino, Policy analyst, Democratization expert. E-mail: mdibenedetto@gmail.com

[1]   Even though, following on Wallerstein and Braudel, Balibar supports the view that the middle class has apparently "hesitated" in pushing the ancient dynastic status quo towards the solution of the nation-state as the most appropriate and functional administrative unit: *Ernest Balibar* and *Immanuel Wallerstein*, Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities, London, 1990, p.90.

extreme example. Within tribal structures various sub-divisions orderly set segments into functional systems. The contribution of individuals was irrelevant if not for their being a contribution to a specific social component. The undifferentiated contribution through masses' work contrasts strongly, from this point of view, with the affirmation of the dignity of the individual, ensured by the granting of citizenship rights. With modernity the individual is granted with rights as never before, the sacrality of a person reaches its peak as each single individual is considered unique and so a carrier of unique characteristics. This modern sensitivity has been laid upon various beliefs or ideologies: from a religious point of view, it would be the uniqueness of God's gifts to make an individual so sacred; in a more lay reading it is the uniqueness of the capacities and talents of any individual that make its contribution to humanity non replicable.

As to this there is a double gap between pre-modern and modern societies. While on one side individual rights are defined, established by the uniqueness of the individual and his sacrality, on the other side each individual becomes an equal and interchangeable member within the nation-state body; a member fully replaceable. The national solidarity between the individuals replaces, through a complex labour division, a society divided along groups with different characteristics and different social functions. Pre-modern societies are structured and allowed to function through the contribution of the different constituent groups. Modern national communities, on the contrary, allow the individual contribution to become, apparently, organic to the functioning of the nation, and this through an ideal equity between members and a highly specialised labour division. The changing step between the two societies should ideally imply a more or less peaceful contractual phase. A contractual phase which should be conducted by recognised representatives of the various constituent social groups. The birth of a nation-state could then be seen as a compromise between different social groups, with the weaker or dominated groups exchanging their loyalty for security and a defined rate of participation;[2] what should be lost is a good rate of group identity and loyalty. This compromise should ensure the peaceful functioning of the structured system and should, on the other side, allow the dominant group to lead and rule in the name of the whole community. Or, with a different formulation, to the benefit of the nation.

Societies emerging from the industrial revolution era found themselves obliged to solve the clear contradiction between the ideal equality of all men within the national community and the actual deep inequality between them. The disappearing of the dynastic state in Europe, between the 17th and 19th century, gave way to new socio-economic structures built around the idea of the modern individual (or, provocatively, the other way around...). The inequality of men within the nation-states, shaped in its form by modernity, had to be covered or justified. The "civic" declination of the nation ideal would realise this by the free will and granting of rights and duties upon each individual; the "ethnic" declination of

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[2] *Andreas Wimmer*, Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict : Shadows of Modernity, Cambridge, 2002, p. 230.

the nation would re-compose the contradiction through an idea of commonality of descent and the sharing of a common destiny.[3] In both cases the state, the other side of the coin of this pact, could not possibly be a private administrative subject, owned by a single man who, by definition, could not be "equal" to the others. The state should have been on the contrary intended as the natural personification of this community of equals, representing the concrete means of action of a community on the world-system level, by promoting, sanctioning and ruling internally and externally.

Apart from the differences between the two *idealtypen* of nation, nationalism in Europe has proved to be a very effective mechanism to provide the mass of industrial worker with a new meaning of "belonging together", allowing the sharing of common objectives and goals within different and deeply unequal segments of those communities. Nationalism has filled a gap in industrial societies allowing their progress and persistence. While on one side the concept of citizenship started to affirm itself through the definition of the rights of the individual as such, on the other side the individual of the industrial revolution was left alone, deprived of intermediary identification groups and exposed to a much weighty relation with the state. While from a normative point of view his rights had to be clearly stated in this unequal relationship, his sense of belonging could not be based any longer on intermediary loyalties. Nationalism has provided the perfect tool, and a powerful one, to integrate this process.

B.   Discovering the nation

The powerful capacity of appeal of nationalism is quite unique in modern times. Nationalism and its persistence have been analysed in various theories and according to various contexts, but its profound appeal on communities at any latitude can only be paralleled with the appeal and persistence capacity of religions. In fact nationalism seems to have some traits in common with the religious sphere: the idealization, the myths and the constant reference to sacrifice, its inner sense of transcendence. The use of history, of symbols, of heroes and martyrs has been capable of pushing whole generations to extreme sacrifice, to show the peaks of human soul and its lowest instincts. For almost two centuries not only the concept of nation has proved effective, but, exported by colonialism, it has also proved flexible enough to adapt to different contexts and a valuable tool even within the unpredictable and radical changes prompted by globalisation. For the individual, being part of a community of "alikes", moving within and towards the same destiny, might still provide, for various communities around the globe, a reading lens for the actual inequality of the modern economic systems. Nationalism seems somehow capable of providing a further

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[3]   By "civic" or "ethnic" nationalism I refer here to the two ideal types of nationalism tracing back their origin to, respectively, the 1789 Déclaration and the conceptualization of *Ernest Renan* (Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?, 1882), and to the nationalism of *Herder* Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit and, much more radically, of *Fichte*, Reden an die deutsche Nation.

meaning to individual lives, placing them within a communitarian destiny. It is the sense of a disappearance of linear time that obliges the individual to identify with previous, present and post generations of a determined community, providing an additional meaning to his presence and his actions. In this sense the history of a nation should appeal to all men and women within a given area at a given time by linking them to a commonality which encompasses the past, the present and the future. In order to do this, differences within members or components of the community ought to be minimized or cancelled, opposite to a differentiation with other nations (real or imagined) which should be instead highlighted and possibly exaggerated. A history should be shared and identification characters should be brought into being. A common tradition highlighting the "spirit" of a nation then has to be moulded and shared; and since the nation is composed of individuals, all equals, all of them will share and will be carriers of the same *spirit* or *genius populi.*[4]

An interesting analysis of the mechanism behind the "structuring" of the tradition and its importance in the building of an imagined community has been provided by Hobsbawm and Ranger in their *The Invention of Tradition.* The analysis by Hugh Trevor-Roper of the tradition of Scottish highlands provides an exemplary model of such a process.[5] The rhetoric mechanism supports the view of a necessity of restoration of "lost" traditions and essential characteristics of the most genuine spirit of a people, unfortunately hidden under the cultural cover imposed by a dominant group, in order for the individuals of the dominated group to regain a true identity and a sense of belonging. The article by Trevor-Roper seems to highlights a peculiar "elastic effect" as to elites and diasporas. Cultural domination can prompt an emulation effect in a dominated group which, during the first stages, is pushed to emulate and mingle with the dominant group. Peripheral elites assimilate the culture and the symbols of the dominant group's elites in an effort to compensate the perceived gap of cultural inferiority. When integration might appear has obtained, as far as the elites and bureaucratic class are concerned, a need for recuperation of an "original" cultural identity emerges and it is launched and supported by those same sectors of the dominated group which have reached a high level of integration with the dominant group. At this stage a restoration of traditions can only be mediated as, probably, there are no or very few direct links to any "genuine" distinctive core tradition in urban elites. A search for an evident uniqueness is pushed forward and distinction traits are highlighted or produced.[6] Walker

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[4] It is once more to the *Kulturnation* and to his main herald, Johann Gottfried Herder, that we owe the tendency of researching and attributing a genius populi; a tendency according to which, unique combinations of characteristics are to be attributed to each people; a *formae mentis* which have been guiding European relations with "the other" since the 19th century.

[5] *Hugh Trevor-Roper* , The Invention of Tradition: the Highlands Tradition of Scotland, in: Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds*.),* The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge, 1983, pp. 15-42.

[6] *Dean J. Konstantaras,* Idealisations of self and nation in the thought of diaspora intellectuals: Nations and Nationalism 14 (2008) 4, pp. 707–710.

Connors developed an interesting argument in focusing on self-awareness as a distinguishing criterion between nation and ethnicity:[7]

> an ethnic group may be readily discerned by an anthropologist or other outside observer, but until the members are themselves aware of the group's uniqueness, it is merely an ethnic group and not a nation. While an ethnic group **may**, therefore, be other-defined, a nation **must** be self-defined.

According to Connor, a nation distinguishes itself from an ethnic group primarily by being cognizant of its uniqueness; so that while an ethnic group can be externally defined, a nation cannot but be self-defined. Even though it might expose itself to some eurocentrism critique,[8] this approach helps us understand how the exposure to the dominant group's culture might prompt a reaction in terms of an acquisition or creation of an identity which will be shaped by contrast to the one of the dominant group. This might of course happen more easily as urban elites are concerned, because of their exposure and subsequent assimilation of the culture of a political or cultural centre and so, by the distance through which they can then look upon their own existing or *in fiery* national group. Such a condition may exaggerate or push to exaggerate defining traits of the group in the eyes of its elite. Such a mechanism has to find its source of inspiration in history, events and cultural traits which shall be imbued of appealing historical references capable of supporting the creation of an identity within the group. Historical "truths", heroes and injustices suffered by the group find here their best place, within a rhetorical framework of an unjustly neglected pride of belonging. Unjust because such an identity, as strange as it might seem, is better structured through glorious losses than through shining victories, as the myth of Kosovo Polje for the Serbs might well exemplify.

The de-structuring of the mythological components could allow us to look at the nation as an ideological-symbolic representation; within an elitist approach this might further help us bring into light some more leverages behind nationalism's force of appeal. According to this approach, nationalist ideology would provide the nation with factual truth mask, changing values (imposed on the nation) with facts; it would provide the desired existence with its factuality, both of its process (the historical necessity) and of the final outcome (the nation). The conversion of values into facts should be here helped by the identification between the symbol and the symbolized allowed by the individual's feelings. The nation might so appear to the nationalist as something natural and already implying characters which might be missing in reality. For example, sovereignty in presence of a community of

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[7] *Walker Connor*, Ethnonationalism: the Quest for Understanding, Chichester, 1994, p. 103.

[8] As it bases itself on the idea of knowledge of the general framework where the culture at study is located and possibly of the larger picture, it implies that the development of an ethnic group might be dependent from modernization and communication means, as in fact appears in the same volume. Moreover, the approach appears to be somehow teleological as it assumes the nation as the last stage of a developmental process. Ethnic groups not yet cognizant of their uniqueness, where loyalties are still of a local or clan type are, in Connors' view, "pre-national" or "potential nations". Peoples whose nationhood may lie in the future.

language.[9] To the nationalist the nation is "there" and should only be brought into light or "awaken"; or again, in Connor's vocabulary, it should only be brought to the point of recognising itself. Anyway we should avoid looking at the nationalist always as a conscious manoeuvring individual: the use of colonial languages has prompted many African writers to promote the use of vernacular as a real African means of expression but often as, openly, an instrument for creating or awakening the nation.[10]

C. A global instrument in local scenarios

We have seen how nation-building seems to require various groups to share common aims and the path to follow in order to pursue them; this path should lead, at a certain point, to the finalisation of a pact amongst the various groups providing the pre-requisite for the constitution of a national community at a given time: the same nation has to be imagined by all of its components. This apparently mechanical process is not given once for all and its success is not assured at all conditions. The negotiation amongst different groups might not be successful from its inception or might not prove solid enough to stand the test of time or of adverse political conditions. Very often a nationalistic movement is born on struggles over resources and is sustained by the objective of a better allocation of resources. A nationalist path might be hampered by the simple lack of resources to be allocated to involved groups and particularly to the non-dominant groups in exchange of their loyalty. Struggles over resources are traceable as a constant motivation for many modern days' secessionist movements all over the world.[11] In states where the resources are insufficient to keep up with the contractual terms and avoid a discriminatory treatment of the citizens, ethnic ties may become the channels through which the new elites distribute the collective goods in order to legitimize themselves. In doing so the national identity is weakened or the process of its affirmation hampered and ethnic communities become politically relevant.[12] In general, any alternative shall provide and substitute the actual shared sense of dignity and security provided by nation-states.[13] The fact that the explosion of nationalist move-ments is often ignited by economic issues, by questions related to the access to resources and to a redistribution mechanism perceived as unjust, might be a sign of a persistent underlying theme strongly linked to the sense of security and dignity of individual; what, using a different vocabulary, some may want to call "belonging".

[9]   *Franco Goio,* La nazione come rappresentazione: Quaderni di Scienza Politica VIII (2000) 3, pp. 399-422.

[10] *Clara A. B. Joseph,* Nation Because of Differences: Research in African Literatures 32 (2001) 3, p. 58.

[11] *Peacereporter*, Guerra alla Terra. I conflitti nel mondo per la conquista delle risorse, Milano, 2009, p. 141, *C. Moffa*, L'ethnicité en Afrique: l'implosion de la "question nationale après la décolonisation": Politique Africaine n. 66 (1997) pp. 104-105.

[12] *Wimmer*, note 2, p. 9.

[13] *Anthony D. Smith,* Ethnic Origins of Nations, Oxford, 1986, p. 222.

The demarcation of European modern states' borders has come into being through centuries of fighting and diplomacy, bargaining and wars. Once a nation-state formed, a great homogenization effort has always been put in place to minimize differences and bring the sense of belonging to its possible highest. The spaces which could not be further reduced to the single nation ideal are often today categorised as minorities. Minorities which are often not more than the result of an arbitrary sub-division of territorial spaces and which have provided, in the case of historical national minorities, fuel for the various revanchismes all through the 19th and 20th century. Thinking of this mechanism in connection with the process which brought to the demarcation of the borders of actual African states cannot but provide us with a feeling of astonishment. The long-lasting effects of the work of colonial cartographers and ethnologists have been too often debated and cannot be overestimated. African (nation-)states are the result of the delimitations of the territorial sphere of influence of the colonial powers originating from the *scrumble for Africa* with absolutely no consideration for the fact that various organic groups or ethnicities were being separated by state administrative borders or that different ethnic groups found themselves somehow locked within a unique administrative body. These borders were created over complex and stratified identities and loyalties, frequently cutting in the middle of socio-economic nets: communities and individuals have been pushed into specific and often artificial identities, while others were erased. The colonial rule has put an enormous pressure on once multi-layered and partly shifting identities and has somehow pushed for a crystallization of those identities through maps, documents, and census data. Often simply following ruling needs and sometimes a *divide et impera* approach. Most recent studies on pre-colonial Africa, all tend to confirm that identity was multi-layered and that tribal identity is largely a colonial product.[14]

A notable exception as to the African scenario is surely provided by Ethiopia. The fascinating history of this country in the Horn of Africa shows some traits that can easily be related to the development trajectory of main European nation-states making of it an interesting case as to the analysis of an homogenizing statual effort and the reaction of the various ethnic components of an administrative territorial entity. Even in such a peculiar case, some of the traits that can easily be highlighted in most of the African states are clearly present: Clapham, for example, identifies for Ethiopia economic issues and political alienation from the central authorities as vital in explaining regional conflict.[15] In fact, even though the structuring of the Ethiopian state develops across centuries and can be traced back to the Aksum Empire, the state is perceived by many groups as an imperialistic structure, built through a history of conquest and domination: a distant, somehow alien, subject. This peculiar relationship between the citizen and the state is something that can be detected in most African countries: the state, as a political institution, does not have deep

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[14]   See *Terence Ranger*, note 5, pp. 237 – 238, and *Jim Igoe*, Becoming Indigenous People: African Affairs 105/420 (2006), pp. 409-411.

[15]   *Christopher Clapham*, War and state formation in Ethiopia and Eritrea, Brighton, 2000, pp. 8-10.

roots and other communitarian identity feelings often show a stronger appeal on the various groups. Various alternative loyalties complement the solidarity function of the state, often an internally weak one. As a matter of fact, an artificial crystallisation of ethnicity has been supported by colonial powers and subsequently utilised by African leaders as a tool for managing the state machinery. The top-down approach followed by many African states has only exacerbated the isolation feeling of many groups as neo-patrimonial policies have been put in place by leaders in order to ensure the survival of various regimes.[16]

African post-colonial governments had to deal immediately with the enormous problem of delivering services and ensuring equal development to the various components of the population. This had to be done in the most difficult political and economic situation with a scarcity of resources and an "all to build" sense of belonging of the population. The state, perceived as a distant institution of colonial descent, was unable to deliver the necessary services and welfare support. And things were to worsen in the following decades during and after the oil crisis and during the Structural Adjustment Programmes period, which the international community forced upon African countries obliging them to further cut on social welfare and public services.[17] Dominant groups and the elites have frequently relied on ethnic loyalties in order to maintain power and a certain unity of the state, deepening even more the perception of detachment of large shares of the population. Such a framework, coupled with a neo-patrimonial state managing can easily provide the fuel for the breach of the compromise reached between the different groups which contributed to the construction of the state.

The scarcity of resources and the unequal managing of the state, above all if perceived as if or actually done according to communities' loyalties, can of course be easily used or manipulated to the convenience of one or the other elite or involved powers. In many "ethnic" conflicts, the struggle over resources has proven to be a fundamental one, providing a hidden guiding light to the reading of an apparently incomprehensible violence. The scarcity of resources or, paradoxically, their abundance in some areas of the country, and the following creation of marginal sectors of society both in geographical and classist terms, can provide the basis for the breach of the national pact. Within such a framework neo-patrimonial politics not only become an unjust way of managing the state, but also a constant danger. Access and distribution of resources following loyalties which run within and parallel to the democratic ones, easily become instruments for an elite to preserve power or for another to finally gain access to it. Resources are not even to be "national" any longer: as we got to know, during the civil war in Liberia, Charles Taylor, leader of the National Patriotic Liberation Front (NPLF), was directly dealing with Luxembourg the iron resources of Mount Nimba.[18] How and when do neo-patrimonial politics become ethni-

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[16] *Isiaka Alani Badmus,* What Went Wrong with Africa? On the Etiology of Sustaining Disarticulation of the African Nation-States: VRUE 31 (2006) 3 p. 274.

[17] *Badmus,* note 16, p. 278.

[18] *Claudio Moffa*, note 11, p. 104.

cised or "national"? It would be most important to investigate the development of ethnic or secessionist movements at the crossing point of political economy and group identity; this would help in understanding fully how identities might be shaped in order to structure themselves around vertical, client-like form of relationships.[19]

D.   Excluding the citizen

While it seems clear that the economic forms of modernity are somehow pushing the nation-state form to its limits, [20] many secessionist movements do apparently pose themselves a clear objective: becoming a nation-state. Involved groups do find the reason for standing for their own identity often in the name of a larger political participation and/or access to state-wealth management; in other terms, they do look for safeguard and security, providing loyalty in exchange. They also seem to reproduce the same inclusion-exclusion mechanisms which have characterized the birth of nation-states, but strongly characterized by a vertical conception of the relationship within the national community. Cohesion and action components of a secessionist movement are often provided through an ethnic identity element highlighted to the detriment of a citizenship-based vision and through a claim for a more equitable access to resources by the concerned group.[21] When these resources are to be intended as a community heritage, unjustly managed by external groups, the community-territory linkage becomes the central pillar of a liberation ideal. The risk is then, of course, that of a reduction of any diversity to a possible threat.

The theoretical models of the nation which are juxtaposed are of course not to be found in actual examples, but treated as *idealtypen* which should exemplify the eventual characteristics or historical tendency. Modern nationalisms do follow contingencies, geopolitical positioning and, contemporarily, make use and adapt themselves to mytho-symbolic material. So that, the classic opposed models of nationalism do compose themselves originating outcomes which are moulded on particular local, global and historical conditions at a given time and a given place.[22] Unluckily, as Africa is concerned, we have already had the chance to mention how the state formation has been flawed by the rough irrespective approach of

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[19]   *Einar Braathen, Morten Bøås and Gjermund Saether*, "Ethnicity Kills? Social Struggles for Power, Resources and Identities in the Neo-Patrimonial State", in: Einar Braathen (ed.), Ethnicity Kills? : The Politics of War, Peace & Ethnicity in SubSaharan Africa, New York, 2000, p. 10.

[20]   Scenarios depicted by various authors go from transnational forms of citizenship to multi-faceted forms of economic empires. See *Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri*, Empire, Cambridge MA, 2001.

[21]   See several working papers by *Paul Collier*, as *Paul Collier,* Economic Causes of Civil Conflicts and their Implications for Policy, World Bank, 2000, *Eghosa E. Osaghae*, Ethnicity and the State in Africa, Kyoto, 2006, pp.6-10 Interesting observations in *Pelle Ahlerup and Ola Olsson*, The Roots of Ethnic Diversity, Goteborg, 2007 and *Pelle Ahlerup and Gustav Hansson*, Nationalism and Government Effectiveness, Goteborg, 2008.

[22]   *Michel Wievorka,* The Arena of Racism, London, 1995, p. 82.

the colonial powers. In this framework, national movements do find at hand a set of sub-divisions and a system of loyalties which seem prone to be structured into movements strongly based on kinship mechanisms. The case of the secession of Biafra (1967-1970) proved strikingly the internal contradictions which nation-states and national movements were to face in Africa, as it happened that as the artificiality of the Nigerian nation-state was stressed, the evidence of a similarity as to Biafra came to the fore, with Igbo, Ijo, Efik, Ibibio and Eko communities being united for the first time. In modern states homogeneity has been keenly pursued and the definition of a national community has been based on exclusionary criteria, according to a citizenship or ethnic rationale. Nation-states have been generally structured through forced assimilation, physical expulsion and homogenization of the people inhabiting the territory at stake. This type of exclusion is, according to some authors, not only modern, but functional and intimately interlinked with modernity itself.[23] The communities or territories which could not become homogenized in the structuring process of the classic nation-state, and were absorbed as a "different" component of the nation-state body (minorities), have been taken into consideration as an element defining territoriality limits. The citizenship component of this process appears much weaker than the one which stresses on the uniformity of the group, of kinship and common ascendancy. Or, to put it in a more elegant way, on the cultural or ethnic identity. The noticeable crisis of 20th century nation-state might have given the impression that a definition of a community according these exclusionary criteria and characterised by a community-territory coupling was no longer applicable to the contemporary world. In part this is obviously true. The mixed effects of the modern migratory phenomena, telecommunications, information and the individual's average level of knowledge of the world are all elements allowing for construction of identities of such complexity and stratification unconceivable before modernity.[24] In spite of this the efforts of many nationalist movements appear strongly oriented to reproduce the inclusion-exclusion mechanisms which have characterised the creation of classic nations-states and accents are on culture, ethnic symbols and territory. Even though this might seem a natural output, these movements seem to be ideally the effect of a general retreat of the citizenship component of the nationhood and of struggles for access and participation in the democratic management of the state conceived as an individual right.

One of the most interesting contribution to the debate in recent years comes from Charles Taylor's proposal of an enlargement of the liberal democratic pact through inclusion of collective communities.[25] The approach is innovative and provides new perspective

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[23] *Wimmer*, note 2, p. 6.

[24] Identity is by itself complex, stratified and "adapting" and it has been so all through human history. Modernity is just providing identity with unparalleled chances and materials to model itself. See *Amartya Sen*, Identity and Violence: the Illusion of a Destiny, New York, 2006.

[25] See *Juergen Habermas/Charles Taylor*, Multiculturalismo. Lotte per il riconoscimento, Milano, 2002.

for an analysis of liberal democracies, but it sometimes appears too strict in his view of the liberal democracy and rather conservative, in its representation of a national community. The basic mechanism would remind of the assimilationist approach of past imperial examples which certainly prompt some interesting reflections as to the relationship between the individual and the state as to the different levels of identification of each individual and to modalities of management of contractual duties and benefits filtered at a collective level. In historical examples, the various communities were represented and managed accordingly to internal hierarchies and an identification between various levels of individuals' identities was also the rule. Various identities could be replaced, as "merchant" could be synonymous of "Greek" and "Vlach" of "sheperd"; every "nation" could be identified as a psychological type. The homeland dimension, though certainly present, was more an ideal one and identity could shift and change according to the position of an individual within the society; many functionaries of the Ottoman Empire were of Balkan origin and feudal power was to be gained also by non-Turks (as the surname Spahiu or Spahi in the Balkans testifies). Of course a sub-division of labour of any kind according to ethnic lines or tribal logic is not even to be considered, but the possible significant difference as to the capabilities of an individual is potentially given by this internal potential fluidity between identities. Following on Charles Taylor, the process might potentially be a reverse one, going from a territorial bound to the definition of identity. The link between a community and a territory, sanctioned by the visible barrier of an administrative border and the distinctive border of a language would support a further crystallisation of identities. Of course in this sense, and provocatively, individuals' capabilities within the state come to be strongly reduced along social opportunities. This can be even truer in Taylor's view of *collective aims* through his reference to Herder, above all in regards to individuals who would note share them.

As the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina can exemplify, a struggle, ultimately, for a favourable crystallisation of identities to obtain the maximum possible result by the community-territory equation is bound to produce non-sanctionable internal inequalities in terms of access to basic services and participation to public life.[26] Nations and nationalities are pushed to be clearly defined and fixed and while at the federal level the rights of the different components should be safeguarded, the system is prone to produce territories according to a *majority logic*, with respective populations deemed to be almost homogeneous. Rights should then be safeguarded for persons not belonging to the majority group of that territory, belonging to a group which is a majority on another territory or to a group which is not recognised as a constituent nation, so not a majority anywhere on the state territory. The problem has appeared clearly as to the question of nations and nationalities in the Bosnia-Herzegovina Constitution or in the Ethiopian Constitution.[27] The issue of defining what

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[26] *Michele Di Benedetto,* Nazionalismo e identità culturale in Bosnia-Erzegovina: Affari Esteri XXXVIII (149) 2006, pp. 205-208.

[27] *Alem Habtu*, Multiethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: A Study of the Secession Clause in the Constitution: Publius, 35 (2005) 2.

kind of citizenship is "imagined" should be essential in a governance perspective. In defining peoplehood Wimmer classifies three forms of peoplehood:[28] people as sovereign entity, the people as citizens of a state holding equal rights before the law and the people as ethnic community undifferentiated by distinctions of honour and prestige, but held together by common political destiny and shared cultural features. The additional element it's here represented by sovereignty. As to the definition of a national or *in fieri* national community the first two elements do have essential importance in the shaping of the character of the national community, in terms of its identity in unity with a specified territory. The identity of a community of a national type can be separated from a territorial reality. In this case the inclusion-exclusion mechanisms shall be based on certain criteria which frequently resort to language, religion, respect for traditional practices and blood affiliation defined according to various traditions. Examples can be given of communities which have maintained a unity of belonging and retained their traditions also in presence of a non-physical boundary to control access to the community.[29] Language, also in territorial community, has been a primary tool to this aim. A territorialisation of a community implies a complete additional set of filtering criteria and an identity which foresee the subjectification of a territory, so that the resulting identity would not only be the identity of a community, but, of that community and of that specific territory. It is only through this path that sovereignty comes to play an essential role. Sovereignty over a specified territory and its resources can, first of all, represent the illusion of a nationalist in the first stages of the creation of a national identity. The mountains, scenarios, landscapes do become part of the "image" of that nation-to-be. A nation which could be as imagined only if in unity with that territory. The struggle over resources can then become a secondary and only related aspects of this image as natural resources are, by a "superior" law, belonging to that territory-community.

The presence of a physical space to be a national one brings with it physical boundaries and the physical ability to monitor and control the access to the community (and the territory). A control which will be then shaped according to a declination of the right to nationality more or less close to one of the two classic poles of nationality (civic/ethnic). The exclusion-inclusion mechanisms can so become not only a proof of the sovereignty of a community over a given territory but also, more purposeful, the pillar of the control to the access to resources pertaining to that community. In this sense a similarity can be found between ethnic movements fighting for recognition within a particular state and secessionist movements, as both of them base their struggle on a search for recognition of their historical link to a particular territory. The strong accent on territoriality may provide some elements for the analysis of the origin and nature of some nationalist movements. I agree with Cuisenier when he states that it is not the language, nor the territory what allows a people to have its own identity, nor the religion or other peculiarities, but its own project

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[28] *Wimmer,* note 2, ibid.

[29] *Smith,* note 13, pp. 208-230.

which provides significance to the use of language, the possession of the territory, the practice of traditions.[30] A struggle for resources, in some cases, might reduce itself to a simple struggle for survival of the group in a determined area, as resources at stake might be simple ones and the struggle one over a scarcity of resources at the national level; in other cases it might be a struggle over much more, in economic terms, valuable ones. In such a framework, groups do often move within weak states, caught between global economic interests and local basic needs. A striking example might be provided by the actual political framework of Ethiopia. The recent revival of interest in the Oromo of Ethiopia in journalistic and academic writings constantly highlights the question of the development of a certain ethnic group to detriment of the "dominated" one: in this case the draining of resources (national and international ones) for the development of northern regions (Tigray) to the disadvantage of the southern regions of the country. In absence of (known) valuable resources, the struggle is here over basic access to services for the communities concerned.[31]

E.   Elites and nationalism

We have seen how ethnic mobilization may be prompted by a disadvantageous inclusion of a determined group into a political economy, or by a pejorative modification of the terms of the agreement between the constituent groups. As to this, ethnic mobilization or the growth of a nationalist movement can be intended as a peripheral reaction to a centrally-lead system. But describing nationalism as a response from the margins to a centre perceived as invasive or unjust, is too simplistic. This would at best help us explain mechanisms of resentment. As to the African context, societies where the distribution of resources and the granting of access and participation to the management of the state machinery follows a vertical rationale, according to the sub-division into ethnic, religious or other forms of (apparently) clear-cut identities, surely do provide great scope for the growth of communitarian feelings of resentment. But as to the actual constitution of a national identity within modern conditions some other mechanisms have to be taken into consideration. In cases where state machinery management is organised along ethnic lines, elites of groups which have been excluded from power are willing, or are forced, to find alternative political spaces and means in order to fruitfully exploit their capabilities and find a context where

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[30] *Jean Cuisenier,* Ethnologie de l'Europe, Paris, 1990, p. 10.

[31] On the issue: *John Sorenson,* Learning to be Oromo: Nationalist Discourse in the Diaspora: Social Identities 2 (1996) 3, *Martha Kuwee Kumsa* : At Issue: Learning Not to Become Oromo – Chasing the Ghosts Chasing John Sorenson: Northeast African Studies 9 (2002) 3, *Merera Gudina*, Ethnicity, Democratization and Decentralization in Ethiopia: the case of Oromia: Easter African Social Science Research Review, vol. XXIII (2007) 1, *Mohammed Hassen*, Conquest, Tyranny, and Ethnocide against the Oromo: A Historical Assessment of Human Rights Conditions in Ethiopia, ca. 1880s–2002: Northeast African Studies 9 (2002) 3, *Asafa Jalata,* Ethno-nationalism and the global "modernizing" project: Nations and Nationalisms 7 (2001) 3 and *Asafa Jalata*, Oromia and Ethiopia. State Formation and Ethno-national Conflict, Asmara, 2005.

their personal competences and ambitions can be freely deployed. Emigration is also sought after as an answer to such a framework.

We have had the chance to mention already the relevance and role of intellectual elites and to see how these are considered as strategic elements by some authors in the constitution of a national identity.[32] Ranger and McGregor contest strongly the assumption that nationalist movements are prompted and guided in their first steps by a handful of intellectuals or influential people. They provide an interesting case in support of this view in their *Violence and Memory,* centred on Zimbabwe's Matabeleland. The nationalism analysed and described is a local and non-elitist one in origin.[33] Nevertheless, it seems that this case would still represent more of an exception as to modern nationalist movements: the statistics would still provide an argument for an approach that considers how various types of avant-gardes, composed of influential people or intellectuals, would generically present and "imagine" a national community and provide the group with this image through political or informative action. Often such an action is brought forward together with the core of the *in fieri* national group and its image is reflected and sent back and forth between the actors and shaped accordingly to expectations. It is within these elites that often the widespread resentment of a community finds a more defined shape, a clearer objective and, sometimes, a political agenda. Opposite to the approach of *Violence and Memory*, the acceptance of the pre-eminence of urban elites on national movements has brought some authors to treat with some scepticism any national movement. It would be misleading to consider any national movement as artfully "created" by elites, nor, on the contrary, should any autonomy claim be welcomed as an expression of people's sovereignty. Urban or expatriated elites cannot always be viewed as manipulators of community identity feelings, focusing basically on the protection of their status or striving to gain political and economical power for their group or themselves.[34] Equally elites should not always be considered as avant-gardes of a national feelings always and unjustly subdued by dominant groups striving for the plain domination of resources historically belonging to the emerging national group in question.

Undoubtedly national rhetoric has become and remains the main instrument for groups' claims in a state arena and it is used consequently. Typically ethnic solidarities do distinguish themselves on the political level from a national movement as communities resort to them when their political agenda do not foresee a struggle for independence but rather a battle for recognition of the group prerogatives within the actual state boundaries.[35] It is often difficult to discern such a limit between the two category and themes related to a group identity are often treated in a very similar way. Moreover, within a struggle for

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[32] See *Benedict Anderson,* Imagined Communities, London-New York, 1991, pp. 65-78 and 123-144, *Smith,* note 13, pp. 317-325, *Ranger,* note 4, ibid.

[33] *Alexander, McGregor and Ranger*, Violence and Memory: One hundred years in the 'dark forests' of Matabeleland, Zimbabwe, Oxford, 2000.

[34] *Craig Calhoun*, Nationalism and Ethnicity: Annual Review of Sociology, 9 (1993), p. 230.

[35] *Calhoun,* note 34, p. 225.

recognition, various movements may emerge at different stages and according to state response and to the attitude of the international community.[36] It is the nature and the reasons behind a national movement and the contents of its political proposal which is placing it on one side or the other of a political spectrum or it is giving it a certain political agenda. The categories are even more difficult to be clearly defined in when most civil wars appear as centred on ethnic identities. These may frequently be representations of socio-economic positions within a power struggle and are the most immediate way of giving subjectification to claims of different nature, be it the access to fundamental rights, the actual participation to democracy or the access to resources. In fact a disproportionate representation of specific groups in the bureaucratic class or in dominant sectors of the society of a given state is a scheme which can be frequently observed in Africa and else-where, providing various levels of complexity to polarised societies. Sub-divisions of eco-nomic order do reflect in status sub-division on ethnic, religious or even racial lines, or on various combination of the factors, which are shifting and not precise but do allow the elites of the dominant groups a distribution of resources according to a vertical rationale. According to an economic reading of the phenomenon these status differences do cover a class sub-division, with statuses being collective representations of the various classes.[37]

Nationalism might then represent an escalating level where the bargaining approach through the status system is no longer providing a satisfactorily redistribution of the resources or participation to the state machinery for non-dominant groups. The growth and shaping of a national identity can then change the level of the contractual mechanism bringing it on a different level. How this would happen and what kind of political agenda the nationalist movement will then define strongly depends from the type of external support, the type of elites and their focus and, above all, the type of central answers in reaction to the rising national movement. Within neo-patrimonial states, or in general, within states where distribution of resources and the management of the state machinery are determined according to ethnic or other sub-divisions, nationalism can adopt the character-istics of a liberating movement, characteristics that have been strongly present in Africa and Asia after the de-colonizing struggle. Ethnicity is of course a relevant component of a set of dynamics and interactive identities and has proven to be a fundamental one in many con-flicts. But every conflict which is or has been labelled as ethnic has a complex structure of interrelated causes and in the course of a conflict, ethnic identities might even modify and adapt to a changing context. It would be revelatory on one side to analyse how this ethnic identities have been shaped and have emerged in relation or contraposition to other identi-ties and to the general national socio-economic context and to carefully and punctually read the interaction and the type of relation and communication between the elites and the

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[36]   See the case of Yugoslavia in *Miodrag Jovanovic,* National Self-Determination as a Legitimate Way Towards the European Union: International Journal on Minority and Group Rights 9 (2002).

[37]   *Balibar and Wallerstein,* note 1, p. 255.

masses.[38] If the original pact between nationalist elites and the mass is intended for the mass to serve as a unified community in order to provide the elite with enough strength in exchange for a protective framework for a certain sets of benefits, the pact between local elites and the state is renewed in terms of access to power and access to resources in exchange for access to a small part of those resources mutuated into basic rights.

A prominent advocate of Oromo liberation struggle, Asafa Jalata, speaks in terms of "access to power" when speaking of the aims of the Oromo struggle.[39] But this would not be a sufficient motivational tool if not linked to an ideology or imaginary of liberation struggle, delineated as "liberation nationalism" in this case; a nationalism that has developed a very strong political and imaginary heritage in Africa and Asia after the decolonisation struggles. A liberation struggle presupposes a "liberation for" of course, but especially a "liberation from", so that juxtaposition with another or other groups becomes fundamental. Differentiation through ethnicity and the reaffirmation of individual and collective denied rights all serve the cause of providing unity, a sense of belonging and the internalisation of a common path. It appears that this basic mechanism of enemy creation is in fact still effective in forcing solidarity among a group and in strengthening its self-identification. The other component of the process is represented by the recognition of the group identity. According to Amselle, cultures persist or may disappear depending on their capacity of getting recognition by third actors who shall play a role in recognizing and supporting them. Disappeared cultures would have failed in getting recognition by political key actors; so that conflicts should also be analysed from the point of view of this struggle for recognition.[40] A group collective standing, a claim for recognition could be an interesting element within a democratic framework if utilised as an instrument via which individual rights can be more effectively claimed and somehow forced on the political agenda. But that would strongly depend from the goals of the movement's elites and the level of the bargaining between the elite at the government and the elite of the periphery.

F.   Conclusions

It is undeniable that the nation-state has been functional and a pre-requisite for the structuring and development of the modern market system. Nation-states have allowed the creation of sufficiently homogeneous communities, within a defined territory, which could then sustain and be targeted by economic systems. The size and capacity of such communities have probably been shaped but also have been influential to the development of the modern economic system. As to this aspect of modernity and under particular moments and circumstances, globalizing processes are probably making the nation-state a disused and no longer functional structure. Neo-patrimonial states or typical internally weak states may possibly

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[38]   *E. Braathen, M. Bøås, G. Saether*, note 19, p. 8-9.

[39]   *Asafa Jalata,* Ethnonationalism in the Global 'Modernising' Project, note 31 p. 389.

[40]   *Jean Loup Amselle,* Logiques Métisses , Paris, 1999, p. 83.

provide a better solution in the short term for some global market needs. But a dangerous one. The answer provided by neo-patrimonial states to the globalisation pressure can be a short-sighted one. The mechanisms induced within those states are long term ones, not only in terms of secessionist movements based on the same premises, but as an influence on all and each individual. An inclusion-exclusion mechanism built on a logic which is merely founded on access to resources, being it a profitable or a sustaining one, and on exclusionary mechanisms derived by such logic, is set to produce unequal and closed communities.

The negative element which seems to be generally perceivable in modern day's national movements is the persistent fall-back on provincial and ethnic discourse without a general emerging progressive proposal of vaster view as to the concept of citizenship. The logic behind national movements of the past was a modernization and a liberation one. The movements of the '60s and the '70s, though different, seemed to focus on both elements. Even liberation movements of Algeria, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau, with their social (or socialist) connotations, were in fact within those coordinates. The actual scepticism on the nation-state as an organising principle and the factual implosion of many nation-states brings forward themes of ethnicity to counter-act the statual domination in the political and cultural arena. Efforts are brought forward to disrupt the structured historical narratives which should have founded the myth of the national unity. This disillusionment over the national discourse and the fall-back on the search of an identity that may provide a collective sense of belonging have seen the contribution of many African writers and intellectuals such as Sony Labou Tansi, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Nuruddin Farah.[41] As to their instrumental aspects, in Africa as in Europe and Asia, the path of nations seem to differentiate in order to adapt to the different socio-economic conditions, but the basic mechanisms of a definition and strengthening of a national identity does not seem to have modified substantially. The path is that of a classic national movement where the identity is re-defined according to a historical trajectory. A community is provided with elements of a common origin and a factual unity through evidence (language, habits, ethnicity), of a homeland and mythical framework and often of a shared and unjust series of abuses of power. This historical path is defined on the basis of the actual situation so that, willingly or not, it helps defining an interpretation of the social, economic and political situation, and it depicts a common path for the future of the whole group. A common path which, in a 19th century romantic language we would call destiny. The past shall serve as an explanation for the actual situation, a negative one, but also serve as a basis for the upcoming change in terms of historical and moral justification for the claiming of the rights of the community. A teleological interpretation.[42] In Africa, where, due to some of the elements mentioned, the identification and

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[41]   See: *Emmanuel Yewah*, The Nation as a Contested Construct: Research in African Literatures, 32 (3) 2001, pp. 45-56.

[42]   This teleological approach of nationalism has produced incredible results in the course of the 19th century in Europe, where a nationalist as Michelet, not only created for the first time a unique ideal motherland uniting the dead and the alive, but also affirmed that those martyrs needed an

recognition processes become even more important as the domination of political power is very much rewarding to the various groups as compared to other areas, the politics of image and memory have an unrivalled weight within the struggle for power.

It should prove more revealing to focus the analysis of such movements on their political agenda rather than on their authenticity in geographical or historical terms.[43] The weight of the citizenship *par rapport* to a discourse of "authenticity" and the actual discourse around an inclusive policy should be taken into consideration in order to understand what type of society is imagined within a community. It is not so much important, from this point of view, to ascertain the actual persistence or historicity of a cultural tradition: identities are prone to be reshaped even within the same struggle. To contest their authenticity does seem somehow contradictory or politically not useful in short-medium terms, as all of them are, to different degrees, the production of a "whig narrative" and the response to a different one. In socio-political terms it is probably their capacity of appealing, and the reasons behind this capacity that should be investigated, as well as the socio-economic reasons behind the resentments and the actors supporting the creation of an identity, or, more precisely, of exactly that identity at that precise historical moment.

historian as him who could provide them with a voice and actually explain to them what their acts really meant. See *Benedict Anderson*, note 32, p. 206.

[43] *Cuisenier*, note 30, p. 10 and *Mahmood Mamdani*, Citizen and Subject, Princeton, 1996, pp. 287 – 289.

ABSTRACTS

Old nationalism instruments for new local citizenships: a local reaction to global pressure

By *Michele Di Benedetto*, Brescia

According to some authors the nation-state has been functional and a pre-requisite for the structuring and development of the modern market system. Globalization mechanisms are probably making the nation-state a disused and no longer functional structure. The presence of neo-patrimonial states or typical internally weak states in some areas of the world may be an effect of modernity or an effort to provide an answer to global changing scenarios. As do their nemesis, secessionist movements and regional conflictual forces. The answer provided by neo-patrimonial states to the globalisation pressure can be a short-sighted one: the mechanisms inducted within those states are long term ones, not only in terms of secessionist movements based on the same premises, but, also through those, as an influence on all and each individual. An inclusion-exclusion mechanism built on a logic which is merely founded on access to resources, being it a profitable or a sustaining one, and on exclusionary mechanisms derived by such logic, is set to produce unequal and close communities and to force on the retreat a general idea of citizenship.

Potential and Limits of International Election Observation in Fledgling Democracies: The Case of Uzbekistan

By *Christina Binder*, Wien

This contribution proposes to examine potential and limits of international election observation and assessment in fledgling democracies. This will be done by taking the example of the OSCE/ODIHR election assessment mission to the December 2009 parliamentary elections in Uzbekistan.

First, an overview of the different formats of election observation missions is given and the the relevant international electoral standards as contained in major human rights instruments (eg Article 25 CCPR) as well as – in the regional context of the OSCE – in the 1990 Copenhagen document are discussed. Then, potential and limits of international election observation and assessment are examined from a general perspective.

Given the Uzbek failure to comply with key international electoral standards and commitments, it is finally discussed whether there is an added value of international election observation in Uzbekistan. Based on an assessment as to what extent the OSCE/ODIHR election assessment mission of 2009 was able to contribute to the improvement of the