

Fragmentation and Territoriality in the European State System

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ABSTRACT. Western Europe has been integrating since 1950, but such a process must not be confused with state absorption. The EEC and NATO probably enhance national statehood more than they diminish it. Equally, integration has been paralleled by peripheral disintegration even since 1945. This is because many states are multicultural. This process may continue, but its origins are complex, being derived from the evolution of nationalist ideology in the nineteenth century. An important factor is modern integrative ideology which undermines the appeal of regional nationalist movements.

Post-1945 Supra-National Institutions

Any discussion of territoriality and the national state in Europe must take cognizance of the remarkable array of inter-state cooperative institutions that have been created since the end of the Second World War. The most important example of such institutions, because it has been largely voluntary, is the European Economic Community (EEC) in the western half of the Continent. The EEC is by far the most integrated, elaborate and independently powerful of all the regional nation-state groupings in the world. It has its own elected parliament, the capacity to raise taxes in each member state and to impose legislation on them. It also has a supreme court to back up its authority. Although primarily concerned with maintaining a heavily subsidized, protected market for agriculture, which absorbs in total about 70 percent of its expenditure, it has expanded its activities into other policy areas, including industrial regeneration, regional aid and certain social policies. The EEC has abolished passports between those member countries that have personal identity cards, and pursued with varying degrees of vigour the so-called four “freedoms”: movement of *goods*, of *labour*, of *services* and of *capital* between member countries. The Community is, in short, a quasi-government with many of the features of a formal confederation (Weiler, 1982). It is planned to iron out all the remaining trading impediments among member states by 1992.

The Community has recently expanded by adding three new member states—Spain, Portugal and Greece—so that it now embraces the whole of Western Europe south of the Baltic, save for Switzerland and Austria. This expansion makes it

the most important trading entity in the world, comprising a semi-unified market of 320 million high income population, as compared with the US market of 250 million and Japan's of 100 million. In order to weaken the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), its one time rival, free trade agreements in industrial goods have been established with all the remaining West European states except Finland, and to some extent Austria, where commitments to the Eastern bloc may preclude such a formal association.

The other West European supra-national organizations, (some of which extend to other parts of the world), such as NATO, the Council of Europe, OECD, the West European Union and the European Courts of Justice, are individually nowhere near as important as the EEC, but we may say that, viewing all of them together with the Community, Western Europe has experienced an unparalleled degree of integration. The EEC's equivalent in Eastern Europe, COMECON, is far less integrated and seems to be declining.

It is important, however, not to confuse these remarkable developments with actual state formation. Joining a supra-national body like NATO or the EEC, despite the latter's quasi-governmental character, is not the same as being absorbed into another nation-state. Absorption, even into a federation, has the effect on the absorbed state of exchanging one nationality for another, for it ceases to exist in formal terms as a sovereign legal or political entity on the world stage. Moreover, once incorporated, its right to secession may be contested by force of arms. Joining a supra-national body like the EEC or NATO obviously entails loss of sovereignty in some sectors to the joiner, but joining also enhances its sovereignty in others. In any case, the right to secede could not be realistically contested since the EEC commands no armed forces. Nor in practice can EEC supra-national edicts be enforced if a state persists in ignoring them. Assessing the cumulative impact of the supra-national organizations of post-war Western Europe on member countries suggests that, far from detracting from the status of individual member states as national states, they have enhanced that status. In other words, the integrative process in Western Europe has not been a zero sum game in terms of state autonomy and status, but a positive sum game.

The net benefits of membership are most positive for the smaller member states simply because in supra-national organizations and some federal systems the most basic desideratum of representative democracy—the majority principle—has to be transposed from persons to states. Hence the smaller the state in terms of population the greater the gain it makes from joining supra-national organizations. In a more specific sense, small states also gain disproportionate benefits in supra-national organizations such as the EEC, since they are enabled to play a part on the world stage that would not be conceivable on their own—for example, when one of their representatives is Chairman of the EEC Commission, or provides the Minister for Foreign Affairs. In the European context, some of the most significant gains for the small states are probably in the realm of defence. NATO certainly enables small states, such as the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg to enjoy a level of defence that they could not conceivably achieve unaided. If we regard the capacity to defend itself as the ultimate desideratum of the nation-state, then such a gain for the small state considerably outweighs the relinquishment of complete control over the deployment of its own armed forces.

The circumstances in which the EEC and NATO were created were exceptional in the sense that there were also special net gains to be made by some of the larger members of the Community from supra-national cooperation. Both NATO and the

EEC were critical vehicles for the acceleration of the return of the two defeated nations of the Second World War—West Germany and Italy—to international respectability. Joining the EEC also enabled West Germany to return more swiftly as the dominant industrial exporter to its traditional markets in the Benelux countries and, more indirectly, East Germany and Austria. In short, it would be extremely difficult to substantiate a claim that the nation-statehood of either Italy or West Germany had in any way been diminished by their having joined NATO or the EEC. Similarly, the EEC seems to have provided an important ingredient in the resurgence of France to a status on the world stage higher than it had achieved for over a century; not simply from the considerable economic gains to France as a major agricultural exporter derived from the peculiar, not to say bizarre, characteristics of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the special arrangements for France's ex-colonies, but also the psychological boost derived from the fact that all the major EEC institutions are in francophone areas, thus ensuring that French vies with English, the inevitable lingua franca of the Western world, as the working language of the EEC. Perhaps the most important symbol of the resurgence of the French state is its withdrawal from NATO and its maintenance of an independent nuclear force. An intriguing possibility which underlines the extent to which supra-national bodies may enhance their members' autonomy—to be, that is, "handmaidens of national ambition" (Claude, 1953: 448–9) rather than diminishers of autonomy—is the extent to which the considerable gains made by France from the CAP enhanced its capacity to finance its independent deterrent. The one member state for whom membership of the major West European supra-national organizations may not have been a positive sum game is the United Kingdom (Breckling, Shorpe and Stockel, 1987).

All in all, remarkable and extensive as they are, the integrative institutions created in Western Europe since 1945 have done little to diminish the resilience of the nation-states from which those institutions have been formed; rather, almost all of them have flourished since the Treaty of Rome was signed in the mid-1950s. Indeed, if it were possible to net the effects of those institutions in terms of the loss or gain, not simply in terms of state autonomy but in terms of economic advantage, it seems more than likely that the result would also be positive. The West European nation-state, in short, is flourishing and such a conclusion is broadly in harmony with two other highly significant long term trends in the European state system.

The first is the apparently complete ending of individual state aggrandizement since 1945, at least in Western Europe. Every state, however small, has had its borders respected and the post-war status quo has remained inviolate.

Long-term Fragmentation

The second, but more long term, trend in the European state system demonstrates even more clearly the popularity of the nation-state. Like the rest of the world, the Continent has been fragmenting into new states over the past century or so. By the third quarter of the nineteenth century (1850–75) the European nation-state was largely set in the modern mould that is broadly recognizable today. This was the period when the foundations for a cohesive national community in each state were evolved. The primary underlying cause of this process was probably industrialization, with its need for uniformity and an unencumbered market (Gellner, 1983).

However, this period was not only the foundation building phase of the modern European state, it also marked the high tide of a lengthy and massive process of state

consolidation. If we take 1500 (i.e., just before the onset of the Reformation) as broadly marking the beginning of the modern state formation process, there were at that date some 500 more or less independent political units in Europe (Tilly, 1975: 15); by 1875, even if we count the very smallest polities, there were a mere twenty-one. Although some fragmentation had occurred earlier in the century—when Greece became a sovereign state in 1829 and Belgium in 1830—the consolidation of most of the Italian- and German-speaking areas into two new major states during the 1860s and 1870s meant that there have never been fewer European national states since 1875. Despite widespread assumptions about the inevitability of cross national integration under modern conditions,¹ and the undoubted success of the supra-national institutional framework since 1950 in Western Europe, state formation in Europe as a whole since 1875 has been a fairly continuous process of fragmentation. In short, fragmentation is as much one of the historical facts of the European state system over the last century as post-Second World War West European integration. This curious duality is neatly symbolized by the fact that the headquarters of the EEC in Brussels is in the front line both geographically and politically of a fierce conflict between the Flemish and Walloons that has already in effect federalized the former unitary state of Belgium. This paper attempts to offer some explanation for the fragmentation aspects of this duality and to assess how far it is likely to continue.

The post-1875 fragmentation process in Europe began in 1878 when both Romania and Serbia achieved something like independent status, as the Ottoman Empire crumbled at its periphery. The process up to the present may be divided for convenience into three periods: 1875–1919; 1919–1945; and 1945 to the present (see Table 1). In the first period, in addition to Romania and Serbia, Norway eventually broke away from Sweden in 1905, and Bulgaria (in 1908) and Albania (in 1913) were two further fragments of the Ottoman Empire to achieve independence. In the second period (1919–45) the new states were all in some sense the products of the First World War, two of them—Czechoslovakia and Poland—were the direct outcome of the Treaty of Versailles and four of the remainder were the result of the peripheral crumbling of the Russian Empire. In the case of Ireland, its creation may be seen not so much as a crumbling of the British Empire, but rather, of the imperial homeland itself.

In the third period, 1945 to the present, fragmentation has continued, but it has been for the most part of a markedly different character to that which preceded it. In population terms, it has been substantially less significant and, with the exception of the creation of East Germany, it has occurred on the extreme periphery. In effect, eight new states (Algeria, Greek Cyprus, Turkish Cyprus, East Germany, Greenland, the Faeroes, Iceland, and Malta) have come into being though not all have yet been granted *de jure* status as states.

It could be argued that Algeria ought not to be included in the list because it is geographically part of Africa. However, at the time it achieved its independence, Algeria was not a separate entity but formally part of the national territory of France. The case for including Greenland is stronger still since, although not part of the European isthmus, it is neither part of the American nor Arctic regions. Moreover, at the time of its independence in 1984 it was recognized to be part of the Danish state and was therefore part of the EEC. Account must also be taken of the re-absorption of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania into the Soviet Union in 1945. That process constitutes a clear case of integration, but it was enforced integration: left to choose for

Table 1. *The Fragmentation of the European State System: New States Created Since 1875*

States at 1875	Additions 1875–1919	Additions 1919–1945	Additions since 1945
Andorra	Albania	Czechoslovakia	Algeria
Austria-Hungary	Bulgaria	Estonia ²	Greek Cyprus ³
Belgium	Norway	Finland	Turkish Cyprus ³
Denmark	Romania	Hungary	East Germany
France	Serbia ¹	Ireland	Faeroes ⁴
Germany	Montenegro ¹	Latvia ²	Greenland ⁴
Greece		Lithuania ²	Iceland
Italy		Poland	Malta
Liechtenstein		Yugoslavia	
Luxembourg			
Monaco			
Netherlands			
Portugal			
Russia			
San Marino			
Spain			
Sweden			
Switzerland			
Turkey			
United Kingdom			
Vatican			
Net Running Totals			
21	27	31	39

¹After 1919 absorbed into Yugoslavia.²Until 1945, thereafter annexed by the Soviet Union.³Not yet recognized as separate states de jure.⁴Still retain links with Denmark for foreign relations purposes.

themselves there is no reason to believe that they, like Finland, would not be independent states today. Overall, the degree of disintegration in Europe since 1875 may be summarized numerically thus: the 21 states of 1875 have become the 39 states of today. The 1875 total would have more than doubled had the three Baltic states not disappeared back into Russia from which the 1919 war with Poland had released them.

How do we account for this fragmentation process? The massive increase in the number of states outside Europe since 1945 is largely the result of decolonization and in any case has not led to any large increase in the number of separate units; for the most part, the only change has been one of status. Why were the great states of Europe in 1875—which epitomized the modern national state—unable to manage their most fundamental task of all, namely, that of safeguarding their own integrity? One explanation is fairly straightforward: some of the states founded after the First World War were the result of the Western allies punishing the vanquished Central powers by breaking them up. In a sense, the same applies to the creation of East

Germany after the Second World War. But this explanation accounts for only three of the 18 new states that have survived since 1875; four, if we add the incorporation of Serbia and Montenegro to create present-day Yugoslavia. Clearly, there must be other explanations and one is certainly the multicultural character of many European states in 1875. The potential for breakup, in other words, was quite high. As Gellner has pointed out, on a world view there is probably a ratio of 1 to 5 of actual to potential states in terms of the number of ethnic and linguistic enclaves within existing states that originally had just as good a claim to separate statehood as those which did achieve it (Gellner, 1983: 45).

Nielsson has provided one fairly rigorous method for estimating what the potential for new state formation is in Europe with his definition of the "homogeneous state"; that is to say in which all members of an ethnic group reside in one state and form the overwhelming majority of the population of that state. This category Nielsson estimates to be as few as 31 on a world basis, of which only 12 are in Europe (Nielsson, 1985: Table 2). Some twenty-seven, or a majority of European states (39-12=27), are thus in varying degrees multicultural. It follows that the potential in Western Europe for possibly doubling the present number of European states would not be an overestimate. Even Nielsson's less homogeneous category where one group is only in a majority, adds but eight to the group that may be deemed to be the least susceptible to fragmentation. So we are still left with nineteen potential fragmentors.

Another reason for fragmentation is almost certainly geographical. Leaving aside the special case of East Germany, all seven of the new states created since 1945 (the last column of Table 1) are highly peripheral to their former host countries. They also tend to be small, so their secession posed a much less serious problem for the integrity of the host state than might normally be the case. Moreover, all seven are really much closer to being colonies of the host state rather than an integral part of them. In short, the post-1945 fragmentation of Europe is very much in line with the post-colonial growth of the micro state generally throughout the world (Plishke, 1977).

Barriers to Further Fragmentation

Further fragmentation in Europe is likely to be limited, despite the extent of multiculturalism among its members. Such a prospect suggests that the question should not be why existing states have fragmented over the past ninety years or so, but why they have not fragmented more. Why, that is, have some national groups which at one stage had just as strong a claim to become nation-states as others that did, remained as, usually diminishing, minorities within larger states? This is hardly a new question and this is not the place to essay a comprehensive answer. Rather, we will try and pin down some of the more salient reasons for the relative cohesiveness of the modern European multicultural state.

The most immediately obvious reason is that some multicultural states are able to retain their cohesion by force. About half of the East European states are clearly multicultural—Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and European Russia. If these states tolerated the more or less free expression by minorities of their aspirations, as do those of Western Europe, the European state system would look a great deal more fissiparous than it does now. There would therefore be considerably less reason to ask why some groups did not aspire to nation-statehood.

A second, fairly straightforward, reason why some groups have never managed to

have their own state is because their respective territories overlap the boundaries of states that became firmly entrenched fairly early. The Basques fall into this category, as do the Catalans, the Frisians, the Flemish, the Macedonians, the Slovenes, and, above all, the Ukrainians. Perhaps the Lapps should be added to the list.

Doubtless, a longer historical perspective would provide further examples of divided groups, among which would probably be the *alemannisch*-speakers of Southern Germany. Had they managed to incorporate themselves into a single jurisdiction, their distinctive German dialect could have been standardized into as separate a language as, say, modern Dutch, thus forming a solid and lasting basis for a separate nation-state. Indeed, transformation of the dialect into a written standard would not have been essential, as the resilience of the various German-Swiss dialects testifies, all of which flourish happily with *hoch deutsch* as the written standard. It must also be noted that, given the existence of Luxembourg, there is no inevitable reason why any of the small South German states that survived absorption by Prussia up to 1871 is not today a separate state.

It seems plausible to assume that early absorption into another state is likely to affect the capacity of a territorial group to sustain the capacity to break away and form its own state. But time alone does not account for the comparative smoothness of the absorption of the Niçoise or the Savoyards by France, a process that was as good as complete by 1900; that is to say, a mere forty years. The Bretons, by contrast, have been part of the French state since 1532 and it could not be said that they had yet been fully assimilated. Time alone would certainly not explain Southern Ireland's successful breakaway in 1922, after at least four centuries under the Crown. Nor can time explain Norway's eventual independence in 1905, or Iceland's in 1945.

Any explanation for the relative success of some territorial groups over others would need to cope with the complex interplay of language, geography and historical accident in which almost every generalization would be forced to give way to stubborn *sui generis* facts. However, if we move to the realm of ideas, it seems likely that we can make a little more explanatory progress, for it is ideology as much as objective facts which first seems to set in train the notion that states should embrace a single ethnic, or language, or cultural group.

Broadly speaking, before the Enlightenment it was allegiance to the monarch or his equivalent that formed the basis of popular allegiance to the state and this form of loyalty was usually buttressed by religion. The American and French revolutions, especially the latter, introduced the entirely new concept of progressive nationalism which combined national consciousness with popular sovereignty. In this way, the two most potent political doctrines of the modern era were placed in harness. Equality of man, so the doctrine asserted, is a natural right. Thus it followed that popular sovereignty was the only basis of the just state and, as such, it had priority over any other kind of state. Self-government for a given "people" was therefore essential and rule by any other group was alien rule. Who the given "people" were raised difficulties, but not insuperable ones for, armed with a moral emblem of egalitarianism, the expansion of the progressive nationalist state into what it saw as the backwaters of religious or monarchical reaction, irrespective of the culture of the absorbed group, became almost a duty. In 1789 little more than half of the French population spoke standard French (Laponce, 1987: 189). Linguistic and cultural distinctiveness provided the initial impetus, but became steadily secondary as progressive nationalism became a new kind of imperialism; the primary task was thus transformed into rescuing the common man from the toils of autocracy and obscurantism.

The rapid integration of Savoy and Nice by France, plus its unflagging hostility to its own peripheral minority movements, and the United States' absorption of half a continent after the revolution, underline the critical importance of this transposition. The Swedish, Danish and British monarchies, by contrast, despite their transformation into "constitutional monarchies," had never—could never—embrace fully the notion central to progressive nationalism that the state (in the United States the "Union") has a legitimacy that always overrides sectional interests because it is the supreme expression of the popular will. Although Irish independence was not achieved until after a guerilla war, in terms of the sheer capacity to wage war, there is no reason why the British government did not seek to employ the full panoply of military might to crush the Irish nationalists as Lincoln had crushed the South, or as France attempted to crush the Algerians. Equally, the Danish Crown never attempted to resolve by force the progressive disintegration of the extended Danish state, first by the secession of Iceland, then the Faeroes, and finally Greenland. Much the same considerations apply to the entirely peaceful transition of Norway into a separate state from Sweden.

Lurking in the progressive nationalist ideology was an additional argument for scale that gave added impetus to its expansionary momentum and diminished further the role of language. Smallness, as well as monarchy and state religion, became almost synonymous with reaction. Petty principalities, with their irrational boundaries and absurd pretensions—so this aspect of progressive nationalism ran—had entrapped their populations in societies that were increasingly meaningless in a world of growing literacy, cheap newspapers, all-weather roads, railways and the postal telegraph.

The argument for scale was given a sharper cutting edge in the United States where the largest polity possible was regarded as being inherently superior to the smaller because, as Madison had claimed (turning orthodox democratic theory on its head), the larger the state the greater the number of factions, thereby ensuring that no one faction could gain hegemony and undermine democracy. Seeking the wider union thus became a sacrosanct element in American nationalism and the annexation of half of Mexico could be interpreted, and is still today so interpreted, as a second "War of Independence."

While the aspect of scale gave an added rationale to expansion and correspondingly undermined potential political fragmentation, it was not enough to inhibit ethnic aspirations. Some additional refinement of the doctrine was required. There are, as we have noted, many "peoples" in Europe all of whom could claim, at least to their own satisfaction, an impeccable right to self-government. During the second half of the nineteenth century many groups proceeded to assert those rights, but unsurprisingly, with much less regard for the inherent progressivity of the larger state than for self-determination. Viewed against the oppressive empires in which many of these aspirant groups found themselves—Austrian, Russian and Ottoman—they may have regarded mere self-determination as progressive enough in itself. However, territory is a fixed resource, so new state formation must always be a zero sum game. If Europe was not to return to a new version of medieval fragmentation, there had to be in the eyes of all good progressive nationalist ideologists and their allies some restriction on the number of players. So a compromise thesis was devised which made it possible to draw a distinction between some progressive nationalisms and others. In this way it was possible to specify some national aspirations as being legitimate, and more importantly, others as being illegitimate.

As Gellner points out, the search for a rationale for making such a distinction homed in on high culture. Only nationalism that derived from a recorded culture with international status was qualified to make the progressive nationalist appeal (Gellner, 1983: 99). The claims of other nationalisms which lacked such cultural credentials were therefore illegitimate.² Bereft as they were of a Bach, Dürer or Schiller, or a Michelangelo, Dante or Monteverdi, the best hope of such groups was to abandon their presumption and stay with the bigger battalions. Mill has stated this superior and inferior nations' doctrine best:

Experience proves that it is possible for one nationality to merge and be absorbed by another: and when it was originally an inferior and more backward portion of the human race, the absorption is greatly to its disadvantage. Nobody can suppose it is not more beneficial to a Breton or a Basque of the French Navarre, to be brought into the current of the ideas and feelings of a highly civilised and cultivated people—to be members of the French nationality, . . . than to sulk on his own rocks, the half savage relic of past times, revolving in his own little mental orbit, without participation or interest in the general movement of the world. The same remark applies to the Welshman or the Scottish Highlander, as members of the British Nation (Mill, 1946: 294).

The idea of respectable and unrespectable nationalism was not confined to liberals like Mill. Socialists, including their revolutionary wing, vied with the liberals and radicals in their enthusiasm for progressive nationalism and were just as keen to draw a distinction between national movements that deserved support and those which did not. Marx and Engels, for example, were unstinting pan-Germans who applauded Bismarck's crushing of the Danes. According to Engels, this was because Denmark reflected something called 'Scandinavianism' which was merely,

. . . enthusiasm for a brutal, dirty, piratical Old-Nordic nationality which is incapable of expressing its profound thoughts and feelings in words but certainly can in deeds, namely, in brutality towards women, perpetual drunkenness and alternate tear-sodden sentimentality and berserk fury (quoted in McLellan, 1976: 203).

Both Marx and Engels were also ready to dress up what may have been no more than a conventional German bourgeois distaste for Slavs as a rather less unpalatable abhorrence of Czarist Russia. For the left, the inferiority of unrespectable nationalism could be given a tincture of intellectual respectability by two qualifications. There was first that made by Engels, who in addition to his superior-inferior culture prejudice (Engels, 1969: 122–6), drew a distinction between "historic" nations such as the Poles or the Scots who had enjoyed a previous existence running their own states, and *geschichtlosen völker* like the Basques and the Croats who had not. According to Engels,

'These debris of a nation crushed by the advance of history . . . rejects of people . . . the fanatical supporters of counter-revolution and will remain so until their complete extermination or denationalization' (quoted in Beer, 1980: 47).

The sheer vehemence of Engels' distaste for some ethnic minorities needs perhaps some explanation, for it may be surmised that its cause lies not simply in a preference for the bigger battalions, but also to a somewhat more justifiable disgust for certain peripheral nationalist groups, some of whom are still active today. That is to say,

Engels was also rejecting that peculiarly unbridled, amoral and atavistic quality of the extremist wings of such groups which seems to have its origins in a combination of militant post-Reformation Catholicism and a long-standing and deeply felt desire for an independent state. It is to be discerned today in the IRA of Northern Ireland, the Ustashi movement of the Croats, the Basque ETA group and the extremist wing of Flemish nationalism. It also probably coloured pre-war Polish nationalism.

Another argument that was deployed by the liberals and the left to justify their respectable and unrespectable nationalism claim, especially in relation to the incipient nationalist movements of peripheral Europe, was the argument that, via pan-Slavism, all Slav national movements were tainted by Russian absolutism, thereby rendering them distinctly inferior to both the *grossdeutsch* and the *kleindeutsch* movements.³ Compared with the dark world of Eastern Europe, the German and Italian unification movements were *progressive* struggles, especially that of Italy. The Poles, as usual, posed a special problem, for their aspirations could not easily be countenanced insofar as they undermined the unification of all German speakers. On the other hand, as enemies of the Russian tyrant, they were also clearly on the side of the angels. But the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Serbs, the Bretons and the Irish were another matter; the left's view was broadly the same as the liberals'—that is, such peripheral cultures had a clear choice between joining the forces of light and progressiveness by shuffling off their arcane habits, or remaining, in Mill's imagery, sulking on their respective rocks.

None of this special pleading could cut much ice east of the Oder Neisse, for whereas it was possible in the West to resist some national movements by a version of the high culture or the *geschichtlosen völk* arguments, few comparable distinctions could be claimed in Eastern Europe where there were no internationally recognized high prestige cultures so that *everyone* was sulking on their respective rock, so to speak. And if some sort of cultural one-upmanship was to be invoked, many of the East European national struggles could claim the cultural emblem of Christianity against the Turkish infidel. Moreover, even if we leave out the special, highly autocratic, case of the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires were singularly inept at learning the minimal lessons of progressive nationalism. So, whereas the French could acculturate the Flemish of Westhoek, the Savoyards, the Niçoise and Alsations with relative success—the latter case being particularly galling to the Germans who could never quite understand why 50 000 Alsations left Alsace-Lorraine after 1871—the two East European empires set their faces against the key home ingredients of progressive nationalism, namely, a populist national myth with a strong anti-aristocratic rhetoric, combined with secularization, free education and a wide suffrage. Rather, they relied on the traditional modes for cementing their heterogeneous parts; that is to say, monarchical allegiance supplemented by religion.

Fragmentation in Eastern Europe was, then, less restricted than in the West so that as Walker Connor has claimed, by the end of the Second World War, “all but three of the states of Europe were either the result of ethnic-national aspirations, or had lost substantial territory because of them” (Connor, 1977: 26). Nevertheless, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia have survived as highly heterogeneous entities as, too, have both Bulgaria, with its Turkish, Macedonian and gypsy minorities, and Romania, with its ever-smouldering minority of Hungarians. However, as we have noted, their survival almost certainly owes as much to their autocratic forms of government since 1945 as it does to any willingness on the part of the various ethnic minority groups to forgo the right to self-determination. Are there any further reasons why fragmentation has not been more extensive in the multicultural West European states?

The Integrative Ideology

One candidate is likely to be what may be called the prevailing anti-fragmentation, or integrative, ideology that underpins the modern democratic state over and above a sense of loyalty and patriotism. This ideology has a number of components, not least of which is a generalized distrust among the electorate of the core in multicultural states of subnational ethnic nationalism, since it seems to infringe a fundamental assumption of Western democracy, namely, the supremacy of the individual. One of the primal tenets of modern representative democracy is that government is the product of individual choices; choices that are usually based more or less on rational self-interest. Government is the instrumentality for giving effect to those interests. Nationalism as a basis for the normal internal politics of the state, by contrast, seems to undermine the concept of the freely choosing individual and the neutral want-satisfying governmental apparatus, by substituting choices based not on self-interest, equity, or justice, but on prejudice. Such prejudice, so the core voter has it, poses a threat since it invests government within the state with qualities that transcend its want-satisfying role as conventionally conceived. Green has summarized this objection to peripheral nationalism concisely:

Nationalities put givens into the problems of boundary choice; they elevate substantive and transcendental goals above instrumental rationality: they blur the focus of the individual (Green, 1982: 238).

A modern version of progressive nationalism is the second ingredient of the integrative ethos of modern democracy. Briefly, it is the popular sovereignty and common citizenship element of progressive nationalism that is influential. Democratic states, so this component argues, ought to command the allegiance of its citizens since the people cannot revolt against themselves. As a working democracy the state is based on consent; if locationally specific groups want changes, they have the ballot box at their disposal like everyone else. If they have grievances, let them use it and if they can command a national majority, then the political system will respond. Both the left and the right of the core are unsympathetic. The right because the state itself is potentially at risk, and the left because “vertical” differentiation, like regional allegiances, cuts right across the “horizontal” concept of class or income. This reaction to regionalism may also have strong “end state” overtones: modern representative democracy, so this line of argument runs, has over time ironed out its early imperfections. Above all, the franchise is as universal as it can ever be. When viewed against the world at large, and Eastern Europe and the USSR in particular, the “famous 22” advanced Western democracies probably now stand as close to being the best as can be achieved. To want to put all this at risk and undermine the bedrock of representative democracy—the majority system—merely to satisfy a kind of apparently unmalleable prejudice based on some dubious theory of racial difference and past history is misguided, if not malign.

The third element in the integration ideology is the doctrine of liberal internationalism. This identifies any voluntary consolidation of the existing state system favourably, at least in theory, since it may be seen as a step in the direction of the ultimate ideal of a world-state. Such an outcome is rarely ardently sought by the core majority, but it is vaguely preferred because it seems to be in harmony with the times and with technology—the “ever shrinking world,” so beloved of the media. The creation of new states, by contrast, is seen as going against the grain in a world that is being progressively and irrevocably integrated anyway.

Such a world-state, suitably placed of course in the future, is also a vague but popular ideal because all the worst wars, and certainly the two world wars of the twentieth century, arose from conflicts between nation-states. If such states disappeared, it follows that the potential for armed conflict would diminish correspondingly, if not disappear altogether. Any fragmentation of the existing state system is therefore a deleterious step, since it would be adding to the potential sources of conflict.

The fourth element of the integrative ideology is derived from neo-classical economic theory and is closely akin to the first concerning the primordality of the individual. From the premise that if individual utilities are to be maximized the market must be as wide as possible, it argues that the nation-state, indeed any institution that impedes rational choice, is therefore less preferable to a world market (North, 1981: 8). All nation-states are potential constrictions on the free operation of the market; either in terms of their capacity to substitute national prejudice for rationality in individual choice, or in terms of limiting the territorial operation of the market by establishing jurisdictional boundaries, or "discontinuities." Given such premises, it is hardly surprising that neo-classical theory has always been strongly associated with free trade and the sworn enemy of "protectionism." It has also been equally strongly associated with supra-national economic treaties, such as GATT.

Neo-classical theory is equally sympathetic to regional trading cartels, such as the EEC, since they can be interpreted as a stepping-stone to a world market system freed from the incubus of the state. This seems to be the explanation for the curious locution whereby EEC tariffs are rarely if ever identified as being "protectionist" or "mercantilist," whereas the individual state tariffs they replaced always were. In this way the formidable problems that the EEC poses for those who seek some sort of world order are glossed over. The abolition of the national state in the name of the even larger and more powerful state may seem at first blush to be a somewhat improbable step to world government, but because the process involves cooperation between states rather than conflict, and almost always clothes itself in the rhetoric of internationalism and technical logic, regional integration such as is provided by the EEC offers a powerful example of "the way the wind is blowing" to counter regional nationalism.

The insistence of neo-classical theory on the primordality of the market over the state is perhaps the most profoundly influential of the four elements in what we have called the integrative ideology. It is so because it is in harmony with the dominant mode of modern representative democracy in that it elevates the economic over the political. Such elevation is of supreme importance in the politics of consumption which tend to dominate present-day democracies where the pursuit of material self-interest has become almost a mass imperative, such that every major public policy requires an economic rationale to render it legitimate. If the decentralization of the allocatory process, even more outright secession, can be shown to be economically deleterious—and, under the terms of the theory, both must be since they create another discontinuity and thus an impediment to rational individual choice—then the case for maintaining the existing state order and resisting change is immensely strengthened. The argument, we may assume, is all the more powerful and its appeal all the wider because it does not in any sense involve the invocation of a nasty big nationalism against a nasty little one, but, rather, "internationalism" and "rationality" against "prejudice" and "chauvinism."

These are some of the powerful negative qualities of the neo-classical dimension of

the integrative ideology as it gets transmuted into the real world of practical politics. It is likely that the power of the theory is further enhanced in a period of world economic recession such as began in the early 1970s. Here lies a likely source of the steady decline in regional nationalism in Western Europe since the mid-1970s, especially in the peripheral regions that are economically poorer and more vulnerable than the core (Tiryakian and Rogowski, 1985). Although not by any means all separatist in intent, these regional movements constituted the biggest internal threat to the integrity of the multicultural states of Western Europe in the modern era. However, such movements may need to be seen as essentially vulnerable in times of economic recession since the bulk of their support, like the bulk of the general population, is unlikely to favour institutional change that would put the economy at risk. Their interest in regional nationalism is essentially in terms of *consumption*; that is to say, gaining bargaining rights that enable the region to get more public expenditure than the national average; voting for a national movement and perhaps winning some seats; having the regional language officially recognized, in government, the Courts, and the media. In some cases, notably the United Kingdom, the peripheral regions may also have the privilege of fielding sports teams at the international level, as if the region was a full-fledged nation-state.⁴ All such activities may have important psychic rewards since they are ways of asserting personal identity in a situation where such identity is under threat, without changing in any fundamental way the allocatory process:

Ethnicity may be regarded as a search for roots, for identity, for the creation of a *Gemeinschaft* in the midst of *Gesellschaft*, for checking social atomisation in a rapidly urbanizing environment. The increasing emphasis on ethnic identity can be interpreted as a self-protective response to the increasing homogeneity of modern life (Khleif, 1985).

The activists and leaders of ethnic movements, by contrast, are *investment* nationalists for they *do* seek to change the allocatory institutions, possibly to the point of outright separation. No inhibitions are felt about the economic consequences of such change; rather, allocatory institutional change, they argue, could lead to the enhancement of the regional economy, either by abolishing hidden penalties that are suffered by the region, or by better post-independence management. In short, the investment nationalists do not believe that the economy is beyond their reach, but, rather, that they have the capacity to change it in their favour. Alternatively, they may even adhere to the modern heresy that the economy does not matter.⁵ Neither position is in any sense popular since the economy is not only the first consideration of the majority, it is not thought of as being susceptible to fundamental change by the polity. We are all prisoners, so this argument runs, of the "logic of the market" or "world economic forces." That is to say, the region's economic backwardness is seen as a necessary consequence of the logic of such forces, and if these forces are in recession, the consumption regional nationalists will desert the investment nationalists and their cause.

This economy argument is all the more strongly asserted when the region is peripheral. Being far from the core of the national economy, so the argument runs, means that low growth and unemployment are as natural as rain and sunshine and will correspondingly worsen in a recession. There is no bucking the hard economic realities, so if the peripheral region's relative poorness is to be tackled it can only be by means of central transfers. As an irrevocably dependent element, the unity of the

state is *more* essential for the periphery than for the core. Such arguments drive the wedge between the investment and consumption regional nationalists even deeper. In short, the economy argument is probably the most important inhibiting factor for the regional nationalist movement since it will always deny it a mass following, even perhaps in times of boom.

What is surprising is that investment nationalists rarely, if ever, question the economy argument. They may assert, as we have noted, that, come independence, things will be better, but they never question the economy argument on its own terms. In reality, however, the case for maintaining the status quo has the central weakness of assuming that the national economy is somehow prior to, or more primordial than, the state itself. Yet, far from being primordial, that economy has inescapably been created and shaped by the state. Its configuration is purely arbitrary and peripheral regions are peripheral because the boundary of the state has made them so. The Highlands and Islands of Scotland—the archetypal British periphery—are not peripheral to the Faeroes or Iceland, and both are highly successful economies. The Midi is peripheral to Paris, but not to Spain's twin economic heartlands, the Basque country and Catalonia; nor is it peripheral to the Italian economic centre—the Turin–Genoa–Milan triangle. With the exception of those regions on the very limits of human habitation, like northern Norway or Finland, the boundaries of the West European national state alone determine peripherality. So the economic consequences of separation for a peripheral region can never be pre-ordained. It may suffer an economic decline as a consequence of separation, but its prior performance as a periphery is far from being in any sense a guide. By separating, the region will create a new centre and a new decision-making world in that centre, which will give a higher priority to its economy than even the most assiduously redistributive centre could under the old order. In other words; what was one among many concerns of the old core becomes the central priority of the new state and no holds will be barred as it seeks to ensure its own survival. It will be precisely that world economy that was supposed to render the former peripheral region “unviable” that, with ever increasing specialization, offers the possibility of achieving all that the old centre did. This is the world of the micro-state and some of the smallest—Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan—are economically the most successful, yet few enjoy the advantages in terms of human resources and closeness to markets of even the most peripheral West European region. One of the key defects of the economy argument is that it discounts political will and human capital. It is not being claimed that a self-governed periphery could conjure up resources that do not already exist, or change the region's location. On the other hand, it *is* claimed that there are no immutable laws which condemn the region to the economic status it enjoys as a periphery.

If we return to our starting point, which was why has there not been more fragmentation in Europe, an important element in the answer may be institutional concessions made by the central state to appease peripheral consumption nationalism, in addition to the largely symbolic ones already mentioned. Such concessions mainly take the form of an intermediate regional, or meso, level of elected government with some independent taxing powers. Italy, Spain, France and Belgium have created a meso level of this kind. In the long term, this might turn out to be the most important reason why some states have remained largely quiescent.⁶

All in all, any predictions about the continued fragmentation of the state system in Western Europe has to recognize that a number of fairly formidable barriers to such a process are still operative, not least of which is the continued economic recession.

Except among the extremists of Basque nationalism, Northern Ireland Catholicism and Corsican nationalism, any resuscitation of regional ethnic nationalism on a wide scale may well, curiously enough, require the return of a world boom.

The other possible exceptions to this apparently stable future, even for the most heterogeneous states, are the special cases of highly peripheral islands which nurture a strong sense of difference from the mainland core and whose defection might just be tolerable to the core because of their scale and peripherality and so might be permitted to "go it alone," on the Faeroes model. Such examples include Madeira, the Azores, Corsica, and possibly, one or other of the minor islands in the UK. Almost all of the post-1945 breakaway states have been islands (see Table 1). Nevertheless, there are many islands, and even those that have a separate, or nearly separate, language from that of the mainland majority, have remained within their respective national folds. Perhaps the explanation is the existence of special institutional arrangements—the equivalent of the meso governments just discussed—that give them a degree of autonomy that is greater than that accorded to mainland sub-national areas. Such arrangements apply to all the islands just mentioned, as well as to the Balearics, Sardinia, Sicily, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, the Shetlands and the Åland islands of Finland. The peripheral island phenomenon apart, the European state system in 1988 looks very stable for the foreseeable future.

Notes

1. For a discussion of the predictions of cross-national integration theory, see L. J. Sharpe "Decentralist Trends in Western Europe: A First Appraisal," in L. J. Sharpe (ed.) *Decentralist Trends in Western Democracies*, (London: Sage, 1981).
2. For a modern account of the two types of nationalism, see John Plamenatz "Two Types of Nationalism," in E. Kamenka (ed.) *Nationalism, the Nature and Evolution of an Idea* (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), corrected edition.
3. See Hugh Seton-Watson *Nations and States* (London: Methuen, 1977), ch. 12 for an informative discussion of the respectable-unrespectable division of national movements drawn by the socialists and the liberals.
4. For a discussion of the symbolic concessions made by the United Kingdom to its peripheral regions, see L. J. Sharpe, "Devolution and Celtic Nationalism in the U.K.," *West European Politics* 8:3 (1985).
5. I am indebted to Leslie Green for the conceptualization of regional ethnic nationalists as consumption or investment nationalists; see Green "Rational Nationalists." It does not follow, however, that he would agree with the way they are depicted in this paper.
6. It must be emphasized that regionalism is not the only reason for the widespread creation of meso government in Western Europe, for there seems to be quite strong administrative-cum-functional imperatives at work as well, that are largely derived from the difficulty of modernizing the local government structure in those states with a Napoleonic pattern of central-local relations. The new meso government is a method of achieving some of the objectives of local government modernization by other means.

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