AICEI PROCEEDINGS

We, the States of the Union…

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Abstract

In the past two decades the member states of the European Union have undergone a process of transformation leading to a gradual relinquishing of attributes of sovereignty to the organs of the Union. The content of citizenship, traditionally the basic mark of the political nation has also been changed. The main question addressed by the text is: what happens with the basic components of the nation, both political and cultural, if the dismantling of the nation-state continues? The reflection is reduced here to some questions related to territory, language, ethnicity, genealogy, and the fate and vocation of the nation in a historical perspective. Can a supranational integration deal with these elements as the nation-state does, channeling and moderating towards the common good their distinctive and potentially explosive political potentials? The democratic nation-state, among others through the rule of law, has been able to rationally limit potential excesses of popular sovereignty. Will the deepening integration within Europe lead to a super-state, a federation, as many claim, or to something else? This is open to speculation, but the survival of the basic components of the nation on a longer term seems almost sure.

Keywords: United States of Europe, nation-state, political nation, ethnicity, ethnogenesis, fate, vocation, dominion

According to Article 1 of the Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union the High Contracting parties, all nation-states and members of the Union resolved that the "Treaty marks a new stage

in the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe." (Official Journal of the European Union, C 83/13. 30 March 2010) In Article 3 the member states enounce the goals of all political communities, namely "to promote peace, its [the Union's] values and the well-being of its peoples." The difference is significant from the classic model of social compact: the contracting parties are nation-states, not individuals, and the principal beneficiaries are the peoples of Europe. Paragraph 2 of the same article proclaims that there will be no "internal frontiers" within the Union. However, Article 4 states, among others that the Union "shall respect their essential State functions, including ensuring the territorial integrity of the State, maintaining law and order and safeguarding national security. In particular, national security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State."

The following thoughts are not about the devaluation of the concept of the political nation to the benefit of the cultural nation, although such assumptions might be fairly consistently argued, but about the future of their components in a world where nation-states are losing ground continuously. As Fr. Meinecke noted in *Cosmopolitanism and the National State* "political nations (…) are primarily based on the unifying force of a common political history and constitution." In the case of cultural nations what counts is "some jointly experienced cultural heritage." Nevertheless, he added: "The cohesive force a national religion and church can provide is especially evident in former political nations that have lost their statehood, perhaps centuries ago, and that are struggling to attain it again." He admitted "it is difficult to distinguish cultural and political nations from each other on the basis of either internal or external structure", and gives the examples of Switzerland and Germany (Meinecke 1970, pp. 10-11.) If it was difficult then, it is much more difficult nowadays. The assumption is that in these days both the political nation and the state, as the highest concentration of politics, undergo presently divergent processes of diffusion. The nation and the state have been subjects in the past centuries of a specific metamorphosis bringing the nation-state to life. This transformation has reached its peak in the second half of the 20th century and it seems to have entered in the past 20 years into a specific phase of entropy. The thesis of the eternal character of the nation-state, as the strongest

link between generations past, present, and future is being strongly challenged on different grounds.

European nations were born either in revolutions, or wars or both. In some cases the state, as a hierarchy of orders and titles has just inherited and amalgamated the nation, initially a body of select individuals united by tradition, culture, and specific interest related to their status (by birth mainly). The political nation comprised the totality of individuals holding the citizenship of a given state, not to be confused with the population of that particular state. In other cases the nation, perceived as a living tradition, culture, common will and destiny preceded the state, a project yet to be concluded.

The nation-state compels individuals embodying tradition, culture etc. into one territorial framework, on the one hand, and on the other into a coherent set of representations and actions. In the absence of the state, or in a failed state, elements such as language, ethnicity, destiny, vocation, and others become political in their own right, unleashing distinct energies that may turn them against each other. The mutual safety and advantage of those constituting the body politic, paramount for the men of the 18th century is suddenly compromised, or is fragmented into the safety and advantage of some at the expense of others. This is well researched and known. (It will be exciting, however, to see whether the present energetic, sometimes aggressive actions of the economic-financial sphere to establish and consolidate primacy over politics and all things political will be successful in Europe at least, keeping in mind that in many parts of the world quests for control over people, including their minds, territories and resources employ all the means available and routinely overwrite economic rationality.)

In an unprecedented way, those who were regarded as the most stable and effective nation-states of Europe, are contemplating that they themselves in the first place, and also other members of the European Union will further dilute basic state prerogatives and become part of a larger, all encompassing entity. Talk about the United States of Europe (USE), an idea at least two centuries old, is again being heard. But because the international system, i.e. the system of nation-states still exists, and a number of important actors still not only want to, but actually do behave as classic nation-states (unity of territory, absolute sovereignty of the central power controlling the territory and the population living

on it), the future USE might itself be transformed into a nation-state. It could be called Union, federation, super-state, superpower, or anything else except empire, yet it must follow the pattern or paradigm of the nation-state. For example, the internal structure of the new entity must be hierarchical, emulating the state. It also has to have a precisely delimited territory, regardless of the fact that future accessions to the Union are in principle possible. What is not certain is the future status of the existing political nations and the individual citizenship holders belonging to them, and of those peoples that consider themselves as both political and cultural nations. As seen, the Treaty in force is an agreement between states aimed at creating "an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe." There are historical examples when autonomous political actors united into a single entity, let it be a nation-state, but in those cases there was some common ground as regards the existing main cultural national features, or some degree of popular consent, or both. Integration by empires was different.

Even with the thesis of the Westphalian system accepted, it must be kept in mind that nation-states have a very brief past in comparison with thousands of years of documented human history. Despite the post-1945 forbidding rhetoric about the territorial integrity of states and the inviolability of their borders, nation-states are far from being stable entities. This is partly reflected in terminology, partly by the history of existing individual states.

For this purpose, writing political, as a noun, designates the open ended endeavor, often the struggle by force of arms, to stabilize an existing hierarchy at a certain moment in time between the strong and the weak, and the rulers and ruled. It follows that such hierarchies cannot be crystallized, they are in constant flux and transformation, sometimes lasting centuries, driven by the internal dynamic of the participants. In this context there is a historically established hierarchy of nation-states, stabilized more of less by the end of the 1970s, partly modified after 1991, undergoing severe transformations before our eyes. It is called the international system of states known as global power(s), super power(s), continental states, regional powers, and small states. In certain parts of this system there is an unprecedented concentration of power, in others, on the contrary, a high level of dispersion. While nation-states can be grouped on both accounts, the dynamic of concentration/

diffusion has penetrated already the virtual space and is likely to move also into outer space, both largely beyond the reach of traditional nation-state hardware.

Territory

Talking about the voluntary renunciation of state sovereignty and planning the process may seem coherent with the idea of federation. The most frequently referred to model is that of the creation of the United States of America. Analogies are useful to highlight various aspects of a problem faced at a certain point in time in order to avoid past mistakes, but their replication is next to impossible. The creation of the Union by 13 colonies in North America stands out - from the perspective of the views expressed here - by the fact that only a few sovereign states existed at that time and even those were far away. The status of territory was also fundamentally different. Conquest, annexation, acquisition, or cessation of territories was largely regarded as being the legitimate actions of the great powers, just to name one aspect that makes a difference. Nowadays territorial expansion by force is not legitimate; in addition state frontiers are mostly the (common) frontiers of at least two states. In addition, a great number of states are unwilling to renounce the basic prerogatives of state sovereignty which they regarded as being absolute. Therefore the decision, should it be taken, by a number of states to mutually give up elements of their sovereignty may work in certain areas, such as finance and trade, but can easily run into serious obstacles in other fields, such as national security and its various components and aspects. Exclusive jurisdiction related to territory provides one of the most solid frameworks of the nation-state for the integration of other constitutive elements of the nation. If anything, the dissolution of three important federative states in Europe between 1989 and 1993 should be taken into account when discussing the matter, obviously with the caveat that they had all been the results of very different, but nonetheless tumultuous political processes.

It is a common place that state borders are "made", indeed, most frequently imposed, in other words they are essentially political, results of bi- or multilateral agreements, international arbitrage, or peace treaties. Even those called natural, like seas, large rivers, or crossing

high mountains or the Arctic shall be recognized politically – sometimes they are not. The map of the states of the world shows a politically frozen situation in time, depending on the region in question. There are few internationally recognized states that are completely happy with their borders, even if this may not be part of the public discourse in the countries concerned. From the Schengen-agreement one can draw the conclusion that the frontiers with non-members of the perspective USE will be its outer political limits, while "internal" state borders will become administrative delimitations, orienting the territorial competence of various member state bodies and organs.

Territorial defense was from the beginning one of the main rationales of the nation-state. Defense of the territory meant also the defense of the population, of the resources, the infrastructure, and all matters known as pertaining to the security of the state. In many aspects, as noted, the sovereignty of the nation-state, and not only in Europe, is eroded or transcended by a number of mainly economic and financial factors and processes, but as recent developments show, states are inclined to perceive their sovereign attributions in national security issues as absolute. Even states that are closely cooperating in such matters, for instance in antiterrorist activities, tend to keep for themselves a certain degree of monopoly of information and liberty of action under the aegis of sovereignty and are surrounded by a kind of tacit mutuality. Latest developments in cyber-warfare tend to strengthen this argument. Since this would lead in a different direction, we would not go further into this issue.

State sovereignty over territory is in fact a full dominion that includes title and possession, and presumes similar powers regarding public benefit and the exercise of state functions. In this regard sovereignty over territory differs from the proprietary rights of the state. The state can own land, forests, rivers and buildings, can grant concessions, and can conclude various other contracts within the limits of the law. Under international law however, some activities that states may decide to pursue under the principle of sovereignty on their territories — for example underground nuclear testing — are deemed unlawful. Nevertheless the practice in this regard overrides such rules of international law and strengthens the principle of absolute state sovereignty as dominion over territory.

In a conscious process of deconstruction the transfer of sovereignty must go hand in hand with a transfer of authority. In other words, it is not sufficient to delegate powers and competences, the recipient must have strong legitimacy or acceptance among the population. Let us remind ourselves here, that the history of the modern idea of popular self-determination started with the outrage expressed by the men of the Enlightenment at the practice of monarchs of exchanging territories without the consent of the population of the land. The negotiated change of the legal status of the territory does not mean acceptance *per se* by its inhabitants, especially if the territory is regarded as the birthplace not only of the individuals belonging to the nation, but of the nation a as whole.

The issue becomes extremely difficult in those cases where the 19th century view still prevails, according to which the nation, the state and its territory constitutes a single, monolithic political unit. For example, the 1982 Constitution of Turkey in its Article 3(1) provides that "The Turkish state, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity. Its language is Turkish." Twentieth century theory of the ethnocratic state maintains that the state and its territory are the exclusive property of the nation, because ethnos and not demos creates the state. The nation is perceived as a moral person with absolute powers, both transcending and constituting legal rights. Taken to its extreme consequences, every square meter of land where the nation, through its ethnogenesis was present in any form, whether effectively by the property rights of its members, or just symbolically, belongs to the nation as a whole. Restoration of property understood in this way may lead to an open ended process of revision of the status quo, a permanent source of conflict. No government or individual, regardless of its status is entitled to concede anything; this ideology may be outdated, although the wars on the territory of the former Yugoslav Federation are a sinister warning as to their vitality. Fissures between the components of the nation are conducive to the mobilization of the latent energies inevitably present in the concept itself, especially given the fact that territory means for a great number or people much more than a piece of land. It means also: birthplace, Vaterland, breeding place, cradle, fatherland, home, homeland, incubator, la patrie, mother country, motherland, native land, native soil, patria, just to remind ourselves, at random of a few.

Language

The great variety of races, tribes, peoples, religions and languages existed as a fact thousands of years ago, and is still a dominant feature of mankind. We are not supposed to deal here with the causes of this phenomenon, but cannot avoid mentioning briefly the history of the Tower of Babel. (Here and elsewhere in the text I use the text of The New American Bible, easily accessible and with short and useful notes on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.) This story, according to the interpreters of the Bible, was inserted in the Old Testament to show the wickedness and audacity of men trying to build an artificial world beyond God's will and teachings, and served as an explanation to the variety of languages on earth. In the beginning,

> The whole world spoke the same language, using the same words. (…) the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men had built. Then the LORD said: "If now, while they are one people (ecce unus est populus), all speaking the same language, they have started to do this, nothing will later stop them from doing whatever they presume to do. Let us then go down and there confuse their language, so that one will not understand what another says." Thus the LORD scattered them from there all over the earth, and they stopped building the city (Genesis 11).

Whether it was the punishment of the Lord or for other reasons, the fact is that the persistent existence of a great number of languages has long been regarded as a burden, not a value. Language diversity as a universal cultural value was recognized in the past two decades of the 18th century, and the active protection of lesser spoken, minority or regional languages threatened by disappearance is a recent, post Second World War development, accelerated in the 1990s.

St. Augustine, for example, addressed the issue in Chapter 7, Book XIX of De Civitate Dei under the title "Human society divided by differences of language. The misery of war, even when just." In the world, he writes, "the diversity of languages separates man from man."

> For if two men meet, and are forced by some compelling reason not to pass on but to stay in company, then if neither knows the other's language, it is easier for dumb animals, even of different kinds, to associate together than these men, although both are human beings. For when men cannot communicate their thoughts to each other, simply because of difference of language, all the similarity of their common human nature is of no avail to unite them in fellowship. So it is this that a man would be more cheerful with his dog for company than with a foreigner (St. Augustine 1984, p. 861).

Latin was the dominant language of the age in Western Europe, and it was only obvious that the Church, European monarchs and their chancelleries, and educated people in general accepted this language both as the official, and frequently the interpersonal means of communication, long after the Western Roman Empire collapsed.

With the Protestant revolutions of the 16th century a revival of local or national languages (native tongues) emerged and developed at an increasing scale. Two hundred years later, German romantic idealism began emphasizing the cultural value of linguistic diversity, thereby emphasizing the cultural value of national languages, which of course meant German in the first place. During the French Revolution, Jacobins urged measures enhancing the knowledge and use of the French language. "Linguistic nationalism" took shape and spread in a matter of decades throughout Europe. Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), one of the most prominent early German liberals was of the opinion that "absolutely nothing is so important for a nation's culture as its language", a statement that became a proverb in the last two centuries. Another famous statement, which has been widely quoted ever since, is that "Since language, in whatever shape we may receive it, is always the mental exhalation of a nationally individual life" (Humboldt 1999, pp. 25, 64).

Notwithstanding his epochal inquiries on linguistic issues, from our perspective the influence of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), the 'discoverer' of national and world history, reveals itself from another angle. Herder advanced two main theses which have determined the course of historicism over almost two centuries. According to one of the

most authorized interpreters of this school of thinking, Georg Iggers, the first ran plainly against the philosophy of natural law. For Herder all values and knowledge are related to history and are individualistic. The second stand is that history is in a constant motion, nevertheless, "within the flux of history, there are certain centers with at least relative stability: the nations." Also,

> They possess a morphology; they are alive; they grow. They are not rational in character, but dynamic and vital; things in themselves, not means. It is the historian's task to understand them. Nations have the characteristics of persons: they have a spirit and they have a life span. They are not a collection of individuals, but are organisms (Iggers 1968, p. 35).

As Iggers further noted, Herder was a supporter of liberal state reforms and received with sympathy the news on the outbreak of the French revolution, but "his view of history certainly undermined the theoretical basis upon which the tradition of classic liberalism was based. Herder's theories of truth and value were incompatible with the philosophy of natural law or the theory of the social contract." (Iggers 1968, p. 36)

Herder's philosophy struck a chord all over Europe, where he was read. In the 1820s, Edgar Quinet translated his main, voluminous work, Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Humanity (1784–91) in French. Other works were translated in English and the Slavonic languages, becoming known and debated by the intelligentsia of the peoples of Eastern and Southeastern Europe looking for national emancipation. While the idea of peoples' self-determination was disseminated before the French revolution, Herder's concept of the people emphasized not only the equality but also the uniqueness of all peoples which, in the words of Georg Iggers are "contributors to the richness of the human spirit" (Iggers 1963, p. 38). Such emphatic discourse on the uniqueness of each of the European peoples is still with us, promoted by individuals holding a variety various political affiliations, sometimes with exclusive motivations.

If it is true that such a strong bond exists between the nation and its language, the issue of its preservation, development, use, and transmission to the offspring, then it is no wonder that these and related issues have been formulated in the past two centuries sometimes in dramatic terms. From the assertion "the nation lives through its language" it follows logically that for the survival of the nation the survival of its language is crucial.

Ethnos, Ethnicity, Ethnogenesis, Genealogy

Ancient civilizations, as well as medieval kingdoms and empires had no problems as to where they come from and what they were for. What is called today ethnogenesis (from the Greek ethnos and genesis, the latter meaning in general origin, birth) is a modern phenomenon and it means the conscious research and explanation, often an innovative construction of the origin of a certain group, claiming to be a people defined as an "ethnic group", ethnic meaning in fact "common origin". Such endeavors intensified with the religious fragmentation of Western Europe and increased in number and intensity with the linguistic revival of the 18th century, briefly described above.

There is a problem with the notion of "people" within this context. A 1939 reference report of the British Royal Institute of International Affairs drew the attention to the fact that:

> People is a wider term which can cover, in addition to nation, the members of the political unit, the State, and of the ethnological unit, 'the race', and is in addition an apt name for any aggregation of individuals which cannot be described by the other terms (Nationalism 1939, XVII).

In the German tradition, traced back to Herder, and the scientific literature of the 19th century, the term *Volk* (people) mostly meant the politically organized entity, while Nation was interpreted either as the natural unit (of common descent) or as the cultural community. The influential Swiss born German lawyer, Johann Kaspar Bluntschli wrote in the 1870th, after the German unification:

> By a Nation (Volk) we generally understand a society of all the members of a State as united and organized in the State. The Nation comes into being with the creation of the State. It is the consciousness, more or less developed of political connection and unity which lifts the Nation above the People (Bluntschli 1885, p. 86).

Previously, he argued that in the Middle Ages the Germans "were at once a people (Nation) and a nation (*Volk*)," while in the last few centuries "they ceased to be a nation, and were rather a people divided into a number of different states, countries, and one may say nations" (Bluntschli 1885, p. 82 Italics in the original.)

After the First World War, the term Volk took precedence, due to a movement aimed at purging foreign words from the German language, designating "a body of men who are physically, and therefore spiritually, or common (or at least similar) descent" and a will to live together; "Volk is now {in the 1930s – GB} taken to include all Germans who are still conscious of their descent, no matter where they are living" (Nationalism 1939, XIX). The Greek "ethnos" has been translated generally by "people" as an "ethnic group", a group with a common origin, that is of the same race, i.e. "blood". Aristotle has used the term ethnos (ἔθνος) in his Politics (1252b 20 and 1326b 5 respectively) to describe „a number of people accustomed to live together, a company, a body of men." Other words in English used to translate "ethnos" are: nation, people, caste, tribe.

If we accept that ethnos means in principal a "body of men" of common origin, the notions of "people" and "ethnic group" are interchangeable, and it can be rightly claimed that the nation is a specific ethnic group. From a political perspective a nation is a people taking its fate into its own hands, in other words the nation exercises its right to self-determination by constituting a state. International law, as developed after 1945, implicitly equates the term "people" with the population of a state.

At this junction it is the sequence of events that counts. Modern nation-states are a result of Western European cultural and political development. Those peoples which created first their own states have been and still are at an advantage by comparison all latecomers. This is

where genealogy, and in particular the genealogy of peoples enters the stage and gains prominence.

As in many other cases referred to so far, the composite word "genealogy" is also of Greek origin: it comes from γενεά, genea, "generation"; and λόγος, logos, "knowledge". In its daily meaning is the systematic study of families, their generational lineages and history. In Western European genealogy used to be concerned with the kinship and descent of kings and aristocrats: the specific lineage was the basis of legitimacy to personal and family wealth and rule.

The ethnogenesis of modern nations is some cases, especially in Eastern and Central Europe follows the same logic: there is an exceptional event in the beginning, something great, heroic, with or without supernatural elements. According to the secular approach, not really characteristic to this region, the nation comes into being not through the will of God, or as a result of the organic development of the spirit of the people, but of the (free) will of its constituents. Its origin is a political act, like a revolution, with its immanent destructive and at the same time creative energy, the palpable "earthly" result of the process of being the nation-state.

The "nations" of Eastern and Central Europe had to define themselves first as consolidated ethnic groups, possessing a language suitable for philosophy, poetry, and law, and secondly, for recovering their ethnogenesis. A solid genealogy was necessary to anchor their existence in time and space, for title to territory, among others, was based on the claim of "being first" there. In fact, the historical title to territory was usually subject to great power approval, acquired according to the general practice of the age following conquest or transaction, inheritance, exchange, compensation, or successful wars against external domination.

The Political Nation Par Excellence
- The French Revolution

The word nation, as it is well known, originates in the Latin word nation meaning principally birth. Further meanings in classical Roman literature are breed, stock, kind, species, or race, the latter being used

sometimes in a contemptuous sense. Further, according to the Latin Dictionary by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short: "[it means] in a more restricted sense, a race of people, nation, people (used commonly in a more limited sense than gens, and sometimes as identical with it; cf.: gens, populus; usually applied by Cicero to distant and barbarous people)."

The Middle English Dictionary under the entry "nation" (also n ci un (n.) also nacoun) provides the following main interpretation: "A nation, people; a race of people; a political country, nationality; ~ and lede, nations and peoples; of english ~, of English nationality; (b) in pl.: country; (c) fellow countrymen; also, members of a delegation; (d) an Irish clan." The sources attached to the entry are dated between early 14 century (cca. 1330) and early 16th century".

According to the *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution Française* the word nation appears in one of the first dictionaries of French language at the beginning of the 17th century. In 1694, the Dictionnaire de l'Académie defines nation as the inhabitants of the same state, the same country, who live under the same law and use the same language (Furet-Ozouf 1992, p. 340). These are only some examples indicating that the word nation has been known and used for the past two millennia in the sense that we understand it today.

This term became one of the most politically charged words in a matter of roughly seven months in the first year of the French Revolution. In January 1789, Joseph Sieyès, a Roman Catholic Abbé, a clergyman with no great religious vocation, published his incendiary pamphlet entitled What is the Third Estate? He started straight: "There are three questions that we have to ask of ourselves: 1. What is the Third Estate? Everything. 2. What, until now, has it been in the existing political order? Nothing. 3. What does it want to be? Something" (Sieyès 2003, p. 94). The Third Estate, he claimed, in opposition to the first two, the aristocracy and the clergy, in other words, the privileged, provides all the activities that any support society. The passionate text continues with an astonishing self-confidence from a man, who as a priest belonged to the First Estate:

Who then would dare to say that the Third Estate does not, within itself, contain everything needed to form a complete

nation? It resembles a strong, robust man with one arm in chains. Subtract the privileged order and the Nation would not be something less, but something more. What then is the Third Estate? Everything; but an everything that is fettered and oppressed. What would it be without the privileged order? Everything, but an everything that would be free and flourishing. Nothing can go well without the Third Estate, but everything would go a great deal better without the two others. (…) The Third Estate thus encompasses everything pertaining to the Nation, and everyone outside the Third Estate cannot be considered to be a member of the Nation. What is the Third Estate? EVERYTHING (Sieyès 2003, pp. 96, 98. Capital letters in the original).

After a brief digression on ethnogenesis and genealogy ("descent from the Gauls and the Romans might be at least as good as descent from the Sicambrians, Welches, and other savages from the woods and swamps of ancient Germania?") Sieyès formulated detailed demands aimed at representation and voting in the Estates-General, some of which have been enacted in the following period.

Among the first revolutionary acts, the renaming of the Estates-General as the National Assembly, the parliament of the nation (Assemblée Nationale), was crucial. "The Third Estate, it is said, cannot form the Estates-General all by itself. Very well! So much the better! It will form a National Assembly", because, as he explained "the deputies of the clergy and the nobility have nothing in common with the national representation" (Sieyès 2003, pp. 147-8).

The logic is clear and the message was understandable for everybody. The underprivileged, the people as the Nation must claim the absolute power that belonged to the king. On 17 June 1789 the political take-over took place in the form of a motion by Sieyès, as a deputy of the Third Estate, followed by the self-constitution of that body into the National Assembly. As it is sometimes said, the French nation was born on that day. As Pierre Nora emphasized in the entry Nation of the quoted *Dictionnaire*, until that day the idea of the nation could inspire "neither organic solidarity, nor collective conscience, nor political configuration" (Furet-Ozouf, 1992, Idées p. 344).

The old, abstract and sacred frontier between the king and his subjects had been abolished and replaced with a multitude of new and much more concrete and palpable boundaries, Nora noted. And the list is not short: territorial borders establishing the space where the sovereignty of the nation is exercised; legal frontiers, defining equal rights and duties of citizens, over whom the law rules; psychological frontiers that transformed the nation into a refuge, a shelter, a secure place for the community of citizens, then into a symbol of belonging and mobilization. Most importantly from our perspective, the move created a special alignment between the nation and its territory, the latter as the space on Earth where the former settled, took roots, in other words stabilized once and forever (Furet-Ozouf 1992, Idées pp. 345-7).

Fate and Vocation

In a world where peoples, nations and nation-states have but rights and obligations, among them the paramount, but impossible task of maintaining international peace and security, talk about their fate and vocation after the "short" 20th century may sound suspect, or just strange. Except, perhaps, superpower exceptionalism, or plans such as creating an "ever closer union." There is no great design at the moment, attractive enough and acceptable by and large. Not so in the 19th century. An influential school of thinking considered peoples and nations as citizens of humanity, everyone with its own vocation as a contribution to the great cause of unifying mankind. Blessed by God, destiny and vocation were in fact purely political: great energies were concentrated on the recognition of peoples as nationalities, and then the creation of their own states. All these were not just possibilities or rights, they were after all duties before mankind, history and God. Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) was one of the greatest and persuasive promoters of these ideas.

According to Mazzini and his contemporaries, some of whom constituted the Italian school of international law, influenced among others by Giambattista Vico's views on history, nation-states at a later stage and through them their peoples will necessarily unite in supranational federations. As Martin Wight emphasized, Giuseppe

Mazzini, a prominent and controversial personality of the 19th century, a prolific writer and active politician, called sometimes "the Soul of Italy" for his role of the national unification of his country, was deeply convinced that religion and politics are inseparable. As Wight noted, "for Mazzini God in politics meant, in effect, three things: providence, progress, and duty" (Wight 2005, p. 92). Distancing himself of the mainstream of the era, Mazzini has advocated the primacy of duties on rights: rights to him are the consequences of the fulfillment of duties, while "progress is the law of God" (Wight 2005, p. 96).

Both imperialism, as the universal domination of a single state, and cosmopolitanism, perceived as the dissolution of nation-states into a world order whose units would be only individuals, were unacceptable, "for the individual fulfills himself in the nation, the nation fulfills itself in humanity, and cosmopolitanism left out the essential middle link." The obligations due to humanity presuppose the association of individuals into nations, along the principle of self-determination. It was this general framework within which national vocation had been interpreted by Mazzini. While others imagined a different background, the essence was the same for similar thinkers of the 19th century, and those who share such ideas nowadays. It is worth quoting Martin Wight again, who best summarized the problem dealt with here:

> A national vocation he loved to dream of, and hope for, was that of Italy's revolutionary leadership. The myth of the revolutionary hegemony of a special nation was part of the stock-in-trade of nineteenth-century revolutionary nationalism: the myth of the nation-messiah. (Fichte claimed primacy for Germany, Guizot for France, Mickievicz and Cieszkowski for Poland, Hirzel for Switzerland, and Gioberti besides Mazzini for Italy.)

Mazzini's logic and claims for Italian primacy have been very different, as Wight noted "…in its shyness, inclusiveness, and humility. It was a primacy of service, duty, self-sacrifice, and initiative, and of course it flowed naturally from and was congruous with the doctrine of the Trinity of History, of Rome the Third Rome."

That faith is crucial not only to the acceptance of the nation's, but to the fate and vocation of all highly cohesive and integrated

communities was emphasized long before by St Paul in his Letter to the Romans:

> He [Abraham] is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into being what does not exist. He believed, hoping against hope, that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "Thus shall your descendants be." (Romans 4, 13; 16-18)

Mazzini was an idealist, but not a naïve. He knew that God's will shall not be realized automatically after its proclamation by his faithful. Therefore struggle, including the use of force is needed to achieve national independence and concomitantly the alliance of the peoples of Europe, what he called "the Holy Alliance of peoples", as opposed to the then very much alive Holy Alliance of monarchs. As Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati noted in the preface of a recent collection of Mazzini's main texts:

> Mazzini was no liberal pacifist who believed in a natural "harmony of interests," like his contemporaries Richard Cobden and John Bright. His fundamental reasoning was that where despotic oppression and foreign domination made peaceful political contestation all but impossible, violent insurrections might be justified in the short run to establish free and self-determining democracies in the future (Recchia-Urbinati 2009, p. 22).

In the 1849 program of action, "Toward a Holy Alliance of the Peoples" the main ideas of his thinking have been reiterated. No question, Mazzini wrote, "Our victory is foreordained." It took a huge dose of optimism and faith to make such a statement in 1849, but the arguments as ideology remain persuasive and coherent. Individuals have a duty to promote the "power and prosperity" of the nation, and the latter has an obligation to assume and execute its "special mission, according to its special capacity", in order to achieve the all encompassing goal, "the progressive advance and prosperity of humanity" (Manzzini

1891, pp. 272-276). In 1850, he took his program further, mentioning the necessity of a United States of Europe. "The task of the people who comprise each Nation is to organize their own life", he wrote. Similarly: "the task of the Congress of Nations is to organize the life of international relations. God and the People should be the motto of each single Nation; God and Humanity that of all of them together. We do not simply strive to create Europe; our goal is to create the United States of Europe" (Manzzini 2009, pp. 134-135).

In Mazzini's view, therefore, is that the main agent in the creation of a united mankind is the nation, not the individual. Although he repeatedly claimed that he was not religious, like a Roman Catholic believer was, he had a strong faith in his own vision, as strong as any religious beliefs.

A Few Concluding Remarks

The vocation of states and their constitutive political nations, squeezed after 1945 between unchangeable political borders, nominally independent and *de facto* and *de jure* responsible for their own affairs, in an optimistic view is to ensure and preserve the common good for the benefit of successive generations and mankind. On a less optimistic note, we know that the system operates on the principle of self-help within an anarchic environment, producing continuously unforeseen developments, among them clear and present dangers. In this sense, vocation slips into the highest degree of national selfishness, asserted with proudness under the banner of all inclusive national interest. Nobody questions the need of cooperation, but when it comes to how, where, when, and with whom the system, or some of its parts become paralyzed: suddenly nobody wants to take responsibilities, or when some steps are taken, they are wholly inadequate. Within the nation-state political responsibilities have been more or less transparently allocated, and in some cases leaders were held accountable.

As regards cooperation, including integration in Europe, not only is the unshakable faith of Mazzini and others lacking, but basic trust is non-existent. What else shows the fixation on legal agreements and the modes of their enforcement? The threat of sanctions is by itself

problematic, but their implementation, should it happen, raises a whole class of grave political and moral questions.

Until well into the mid-19th century the cultural and spiritual elements of the nation dominated, especially in the case of nationalities as peoples that regarded themselves ready for establishing their own states. Language, ethnicity, proclaimed fate and vocation have been strong factors of mass mobilization against the empires which dominated those groups that identified themselves along such lines. Once the new territorial states were created, those elements have played a crucial role in stabilizing the frontiers, or in some cases, legitimizing further claims to land, together with the political program of cultural, and later the total social homogenization of European nation-states. Until the end of the 1940s, when the territorial status quo was frozen into the form that by and large survives until these days, secession, irredentism, or various forms of regionalism have been the order of the day. A regionalization of Europe by consensus may look feasible, although there are a number of problems that can be seen already. Within the framework of envisaged supranational integrations the territory and frontiers of prospective member states are regarded as of secondary importance. The Schengen-model is instructive in this sense. But discarding completely the idea of a territorially-bound nation might not be acceptable for everybody, especially if migration increases and newcomers will claim not only rights but also some forms of title to the land. Making land a commodity freely available for anyone who can afford to buy it is already raising strong sentiments in some parts of Europe, especially when land contains precious resources, such as water. As regards the other elements, we know how empires have dealt with them. It is almost sure that those practices cannot be revived, if Europe wants to remain democratic and liberal at the same time.

As mentioned at the beginning of this text, the political nation and the state, as the highest concentration of politics continuously undergo divergent processes of diffusion. There is only hope, and it requires a strong leap of faith to claim that a super-state will be able to transform the huge energies unleashed into something positive, viable and acceptable for all.

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