

NATIONAL IDEOLOGY AND THE MODERN STATE

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Was national ideology or nationalism – as an autonomous social force – an important pillar in the modernisation process in the Central Eastern Europe? Historians and social scientists have taken the historical inevitability of the nation state and nationalism for granted but have virtually ignored the socio-economic and political difficulties impending nation building or the distinctions between the socioregional identities that characterise precapitalist "moral economies" and those of mature capitalism. Dominant actual social philosophy and historiography in the Central Eastern Europe treated the nation state as the exclusive alternative to the "idiocy of rural life" and precapitalist parochialism and viewed nationalism as natural and primordial. Enlightened liberalism and Marxist tradition pioneered and led this outlook on the nation state. This approach was not only ethnocentric but also partisan. Most Central Eastern European historiographers until now were, in a way, nationalists and propagandists. The structural functionalist view, which was developed by some academics, proved us that they were influenced in their research activities by economic and state forces alone. Regarded from this perspective, a mature national identity was considered indispensable to modern man's social and moral well being. The omission of "evil" nationalism with its versatile forms and aspects stems largely from the failure of the scholars and academics to distinguish between merchant capital as a social and economic category and industrial capitalism (the accepted sign of modernisation in almost every part of the world) as a socio-economic, political and moral system, or their neglect to differentiate between the spatial articulations and social solidarities of seigniorial (feudalist) societies and these of industrial capitalism. J. Bernal (*Science in History: The Social Sciences*, Pelican Books, 1969) was the first which demonstrated that historiographers almost all over the world recounted the exploits of past nationalist leaders and provided historicist justifications for the political and economic objectives of the nationalist intelligentsia. A recent similar attitude could be found at Eric Hobsbawm (*Whose fault line is it anyway?* in *New Statesman and Society*, 24-th of April 1992) who put it like this: "Historians are to nationalism what poppy growers in Pakistan are to heroin addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market". In these respect nationalistic social scientists, especially in the Central Eastern Europe,

treated nationalism as a manifest, self-evident principle upon which rationally oriented societies, products of the modernisation process, could build their future.

Today more than half a century after the Second World War, it is realistic to assume that nationalism will continue to be a universal historical principle decisively structuring international relations and the domestic order of states. To conceive of nationalism as a political aberration or as an inevitable phenomenon is to disregard its unabated impact upon politics and history of mankind. Though we might justifiably abhor its extreme forms, which were especially rampant in the years before and after the First World War and even today in the new liberated Europe, we can not conveniently forget it as a pathological manifestation or an cultural artefact in the history of modern societies, nor dismiss treatment of its historical impact as irrelevant. The present state of affairs in Europe (East and west alike) is a living proof. It would be irresponsible and naive to ignore the dangers that nationalism and nationalist thinking undeniably pose for societies in the age of industrialism and post-industrialism. This alone make it more necessary than ever to arrive at a clear understanding of nationalism and the political and social problems related to it - in our case the modernisation process.

The liberal doctrine regarding nationalism is reflected in some versions of liberal modernisation theory which closely linked nationalism to the early phase of modernisation – for instance see Karl Deutsch, David Apter, John Breuilly, Yael Tamir and their disciples. In contrast with this trend, Ernest Gellner (*Nations and Nationalism*, Blackwell, Oxford 1983) in spite of similar premises asserted that: "... nationalism is a phenomenon connected not so much with industrialisation or modernisation as such, but with its uneven diffusion" In the same thinking stream we can include Elie Kedourie, Kenneth Minogue, Peter Alter, Raymond Pearson, etc.

The leftist thinkers – Marxists and neo-Marxists – tried in an almost uncomfortable way to blend nationalism with modernisation and socialism. Tom Nairn's work – *The Break up of Britain...* London, 1977 – is an outstanding example in this respect, together with a plethora of recent Central Eastern European historiographers.

The conservative thinkers, Gidon Gottlieb (*Nations against the State*, New York, 1993) for example, perceive nationalism as an extreme danger for the state and in this respect advocate the necessity of a world government in spite of the fact that many conservative thinkers still found inspiration and valuable ideas in the national ideology. Discussing about national ideology and the modern state we can find some singular positions and attitudes expressed by such scholars like: Anthony D. Smith, Benedict Anderson, Peter Sugar, etc.

The special historical literature dedicated to the problems of national ideology and the modern state in the Central Eastern Europe was with few exceptions the work of historians living in this area and it is poor and strongly biased by the ideological and political factors. Also the authors try hardly to demonstrate in an old fashioned way that their nation is different in a qualitative way from the surrounding neighbours and the modernisation process took place earlier and with more sound results. Of course this is the case of Romanian historiography too.

To conclude with the problems connected with historiography and methodology I have to point out to what seems to me a broad consensus: 1. Nations are comparatively recent phenomena, emerging perhaps with the Enlightenment, or as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, or through the dissemination of the written word by what Benedict Anderson (*Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1983, Ch. II) calls "print capitalism"; 2. Nations are not "natural" communities as implied in the various doctrines and theories of nationalism, but as much the creatures as the creators of the states are conjoined to them. As Ernest Gellner (*op. cit.* p. 48-49) put it: "Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent ... political destiny, are a myth; nationalism which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them to nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: that is a reality". It is quite obvious that sometime a nation is created by a colonial administration, sometime by a language or a religion; but the common language and the common religion may themselves be the result of administrative convenience, just like the nation which is supposedly enshrined in them. 3. Nationalism is the ideology of the modern state: the set of doctrines and beliefs that sanctify this peculiar local arrangement and legitimise the new forms of government and administration that have emerged in the modern world. In other words nationalism could be described as a philosophy of the book: the instrument by which the new bureaucrats sought to legitimise their rule in post Enlightenment Europe, by affirming an identity between the people and the literate intellectuals who are alone competent to govern them; 4. Nations are "imagined communities" in Benedict Anderson's memorable words. That is they are communities that arise partly from a representation of themselves, and which include members who never meet and have nothing in common besides their membership and the shared destiny implied in it. 5. Nationalism became an autonomous social force in the last two centuries with an amazing surviving capacity, combining itself with different and opposed political doctrines and proving to be a constant reality in almost any modern society; 6. We cannot speak about nationalism in general without arguing, but of "specific" nationalism in different areas and regions and in certain periods of time. That is the most plausible explanation for a wide range of taxonomies

proposed by different authors, taxonomies that are constantly in debate. As I previously discussed in one of my papers (*Nationalism si etnicitate. Consideratii istoriografice si metodologice. in Istoria ca lectura a lumii*, Iasi, 1994), there is no consensus among students in nationalism regarding the concept, the definition, or the historical value of this phenomenon.

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Can there be established a causal connection between the development of national ideology (nationalism) and the modern state (the modernisation process)? Any answer at such high level generality is likely to be unsatisfactory, if nothing else because terms such as "nationalism" and "modernisation" have, respectively, different historical and definitional referata. We have already encountered diverse definitions of nationalism and that is the reason why; we started by presenting what seems to us as being a "common ground" for the majority of students in nationalism. Let us now do the same with the modernisation process.

One of the most debated problem in the '60 s in the social scientist's circles was the modernisation process. The modernisation theory with roots in the XIX-th century British socio-political milieu was highlighted again especially after World War II in straight connection with the decolonisation and development processes. What is modernisation? The answer at this question is still not unanimous and actually creates different trends in interpretation. The most general answer is that modernisation represents all the transformations of the society and culture beginning with the European Renaissance and still continuing on a world scale. The modernisation concept and theory are in strong opposition with the cyclic theory in history; it is positivistic and regards human history as a history of progresses. The time for instance is perceived as a coherent matrix of changing. The Nature is seen as having an inherent internal order that can be interpreted by the human mind. The scientific research is ultimately concerned with the penetration of this inherent order and technology has to be developed in order to transform the nature accordingly to the human needs. The role of science and technology is to change the place of the human being through social engineering and work division. If we perceive the modernisation process in this way it seems to us that it is a comprehensive, ethically neutral concept. Unfortunately, the interpretation of the modernisation, its diffusion and uniformity creates large dark areas that constantly generate debates and strong disagreements.

For the historians, modernisation was a valuable tool in discussing about the great changes: the Renaissance, the Reform, the Enlightenment and so on. For the economists, modernisation is the path to be followed in order to build the market economy and to industrialise the society. For the law scholars,

modernisation means the moment in time when the contract replaced the statutory rights as the principle of social order and discipline. Historians of culture – and not only them – considered that secularisation is the main feature of modernity. Sociologists and social anthropologists talk about the disappearance of the extended family as a sure sign of modernisation. At last, political scientists point out to the bureaucratisation of the societies, to the mass politics, to the disappearance of the empires and the emerging of the nation state when they argue about modernisation. All these aspects are true but in the daily life all of the above mentioned features are mixed in various degrees. As far as I am concerned modernisation means: industrialisation, rationalisation, secularisation and bureaucratisation.

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In the English language the meaning of the word **nation** is closely associated with the word state. In Romania, as it is the case with the great majority of the Central Eastern European states in which the national conscious preceded the formation of the modern states, the semantic difference between the two words is still very strong. In France, by nationality almost everybody understands Citizenship. In Romania Citizenship and nationality are still two different things and an eventual attempt to melt them will be seen as a strong violation of the human rights. It is useless to point out that all our history during the XIX-th century was a constant fight in order to prevent an eventual confusion between nationality and Citizenship. The Romanian national identity was born – as in many other cases – through different pre-existing solidarities. When the organic, "deep" solidarity was joined with the organised one belonging to the upper stratus of the society a new social "cement" appeared. The modern state has its foundations in this equilibrium which was created between the "lower" and the "upper" solidarities by using the magic and the complicated chemistry of the nation and nationalism. Modern identity is closely related and connected with the appearance of the nation state and the gradual secularisation of human existence. During XIX-th century the public and private spheres are invaded by secularisation and the new social "cement" became the national ideology. That is the reason way it is so difficult to define nationalism in an acceptable manner for everybody. Everything was once more complicated when nationalism was associated with fascism and quickly transformed by some illustrious Jewish thinkers in the absolute evil. Speaking about Romania, any attempt to interpret and theorise about nationalism outside the official dogma was severely punished by the communist regime until 1989.

The distinction between **political** and **cultural** nations that was operated by Frederick Meinecke (*Weltburgertum und Nationalstaat*, Berlin,

1907) was essential for the future interpretations of nationalism. Gradually, everybody was ready to accept that we have to deal with two different forms of nationalism: a "good" and a "bad" one. Hans Kohn, who offered a convenient scheme to interpret nationalism for the Western, liberal, social scientists made the distinction. According to this model, Western nationalism is generally "good", helping to build a pluralist and open society, having its origins in the Enlightenment; the other type of nationalism is specific for Central and Eastern Europe and, of course, for other regions of the world, and it is "bad", xenophobic, totally oriented to the past, destined to produce the disasters encountered by humanity during this century. In spite of its inborn weakness and – why not? – stupidity this model which is currently called "the Hans Kohn dichotomy" is still present nowadays in a plethora of studies and analysis.

Dealing with Romanian national ideology or Romanian nationalism we can find its origins at the end of the XVIII-th century. I consider that the first phase of Romanian nationalism was represented by **nativism**. Romanian nativism emerged during the Enlightenment, in the same cultural trend as any European nationalism. Nativism was present both in Transylvania and the Principalities in almost the same time. In the first case it was directed against the oppressive "newcomers" (Hungarians, Germans, etc.); in the second case against the "Greeks" (generally, foreigners) which were perceived as the representatives of the Ottoman Empire. The Romanian national awakening has its origins in the Enlightenment in the shape of nativism, which was a dominant until the middle of the last century. Nativism was mixed beyond any doubt with elements of modern political thinking and was promoted and propagated by the small intellectual elite. For too long now a lot of so called "specialists" discussed only the "quantity" and not the "quality" of what stood behind Romanian national ideology. We can talk about the Romanian nationalism – in its full sense – only in the second part of the XIX-th century when it is identifiable in the political acts of the Romanian governments. We open here a very important chapter regarding the relationship between capitalism and nationalism.

Can there be established a causal connection between the development of capitalism and the development of nationalism? Any answer is likely to be unsatisfactory because we have already encountered diverse definitions of nationalism, as well as different positions concerning modernity. As to capitalism, some authors (Pirenne, Lopez) plainly place its origins within the manufacturing and commercial centres of Northern Italy and in the "Low Countries" in the Middle Ages. The classical sociological tradition (Marx, Weber), as well as many contemporary social scientists (Braudel, Wallerstein, MacFarlane, Mann) prefer the long sixteenth century as the crucial period for

the transition from feudalism (whichever way this is defined) to capitalism. Still others (Landes), do not consider capitalism fully fledged until the Industrial Revolution of the mid eighteenth century took place, or even better with the major technological innovations (iron, coal, railways) which only came to life in the second half of the XIX-th century. This quick perusal of approaches to the questions of the origins of capitalism should be sufficient to illustrate the dangers of any attempt to causally correlate capitalism and nationalism. Recently, a consensus seems to have been emerging around the formulations of Ernst Gellner (*op. cit.*, 1983); he suggests that it was the development of industrial capitalism and particularly its unevenness that triggered off the development of nationalism.

The contemporary Romanian historiography – we talk about the one during the communist regime – gave a resounding answer to that question. It was not only that in an economist perspective nationalism as an ideology was superstructural and hence determined by the capitalist mode of production *strictu sensu*. More specifically, this conception assumed that nationalism was the ideology used by capitalists to ensure a national market for themselves by keeping out, through protectionism, foreign capitalists. At the same time, nationalist ideology was seen as an instrument of the class domination of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat, as a sort of cultural diversion to hide economic exploitation. Nationalism was empirically included in capitalism. A good example for the historians seems to be the one offered by Immanuel Wallerstein (*The Construction of Peoplehood: Racism, Nationalism, Ethnicity in Sociological Forum*, 2, 1987) with his world system theory – a modified conception of the Weberian distinction between class and "status group" (Stand). In his own words: "the nation hinges round one of the basic structural features of the world economy". A nation for Wallerstein "derives from the political structuring of the world system" in other words "statehood preceded nationhood" (*op.cit.* p. 373–378). Against this interpretation a plethora of voices were heard and we do not intend to present all of them. I just want to mention the names of Anthony Giddens, Michael Hechter, Tom Nairn, Benedict Anderson and so on. At my turn, considering the Romanian case, I want to point out that industrialism was not pure and simple a *deus ex machina* for our modernity as well as for the Romanian nationalism. Industrialism may accelerate the nationalist process but it does not create it. It is the time to stress on the centrality of the state, conceived as a more or less autonomous entity, in the generation of nationalism.

Another important point, which has to be discussed in our paper, is concerned with the relation between state and nationalism. Today there is a strong opinion that there is an organic link between state and nation in spite of

the fact that the greatest majority of the states are polyethnic or multinationals. What struck everybody is the fantastic power exercised by the nationality principle in the modern world. According to William McNeill this is in sharp contrast to earlier periods of history in which polyethnic structures were the norm. "The idea that a government rightfully should rule only over citizens of a single ethnos started to develop in Western Europe towards the end of the Middle Ages" (*Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History*, Toronto University Press, 1986, p. 7). This principle was fully fledged in international arena in the last century and especially at the end of the First World War. That is the proper explanation for the fact that the modern state is usually confused with a nation. In the Romanian case the structures of the modern state were "filled" with a national content like in the case of many different other European states. Furthermore we can distinguish a perfect parallel between the process of affirming national ideology and the construction of the Romanian modern state.

The medieval state was in the words of Heinrich Mitteis (*The State in the Middle Ages*, North Holland, Amsterdam, 1975) "an association between persons" usually between unequal partners (lord and vassal); the process by means of which this *Personenverbandsstaat* was transformed by the monarchy into a territorial and institutionalised state is referred to by Mitteis as *Verstaatung* (statification). The necessary steps for the medieval state in order to become a modern one were identified as being the following by Joseph R. Strayer (*On the Medieval Origins of Modern State*, Princeton University Press, 1970): 1. there must be a political unit with a cronotopic continuity and a core area which acts as a centre and motor for the process; 2. there must be long lasting institutions served by a permanent and specialised efficient bureaucracy; 3. the polity must be able to generate feelings of, if not absolute, at least of paramount loyalty from all its subjects, making sure that other loyalties (family, religion, province) are subordinated to the loyalty owed to the state; 4. the appearance of the modern idea of sovereignty. I like only to add that the monopoly mechanism organised by the state is another important factor in my opinion. According to this perspective it is easy for us to conclude that the Romanian case is just another common one in Europe. We insist on this because there are still some historians, which consider the Central Eastern Europe as a "totally different case". Charles Tilly's famous book, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, and an acceptable level of knowledge concerning the history of the area will convince everybody for sure.

Another interesting author who was concerned with this problem is Stein Rokkan (*Dimensions of State Formation and Nation Building*, in Charles Tilly, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, Princeton University Press, 1975) who developed a territorial political model in which he identified four phases: penetration, standardisation, participation and redistribution. In

spite of his demonstration he fell in a false dilemma: either the state creates the nation or the nation creates the state. This is typical for a large number of authors but we have mentioned only Stein Rokkan's case. It is quite easy to observe that in the Romanian case both processes: the formation of the modern state and the affirmation of a strong national ideology are interdependent and in a constant feedback relation.

In the argument about whether in relation to the state the nation is a dependent or independent variable; most authors tend to give primacy to the political structures over the ideological forms. It is alleged that even if it does not have the legitimising authority, the state certainly has the legal power and the brute force to impose itself on his subjects. It would appear that the process of national homogenisation should have been an easy objective for the state, particularly after the French Revolution. But history seems to negate this assumption even in the "old" Western European states.

In conclusion the only thing that we can say is that the nationality principle that seized the European imagination in the last century revolutionised the world in which we live; but the outcome was not a landscape of nation-states, but rather a confused puzzle. What we have seen in the past two centuries are political structures (states) being subverted by an extremely effective ideological power (nationalism). It is clear that the *mot d'ordre* of modernity – no nation without a state and each state must be a nation – is still an ideal for which a lot of men had to suffer.

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After this short and, of course, uncompleted presentation of the relationship between national ideology and the modern state few conclusions – which include the Romanian case – are obvious:

1. The ambiguities and confusions, which dominate the question of modernisation and nationalism, are generally determined by biased and ideologized positions. These words already lost their ethical neutrality;
2. The national ideology proved to be a myth-generating factor in society, which coupled with the modern statist identity, creates strong solidarities almost impossible to overcome;
3. The modern state throughout Europe, West and East alike has the same ingredients among which nationalism is one of the strongest;
4. "The Hans Kohn dichotomy" is no longer a viable pattern in order to discuss the problems related to national ideology and the modern state;
5. Romanian nationalism has his origins in nativism and became fully fledged only in the second part of the XIX-th century;

6. The modern state structures can be "filled" only with national contents and in this respect the dilemma: either the state creates the nation or the nation creates the state is a false one;

7. We cannot establish straight causal relationships – deterministic ones – between nationalism and modern state. In order to investigate these realities we have to use interdisciplinary methods.