



The Deconstruction of the Nation State

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In the 1980s one could scarcely imagine a political system for the modern world other than the nation state; an entity defined as a sovereign country, geographically limited by internationally recognized territorial boundaries, politically delineated by requirements of citizenship, governed in the West by a democratic representative form of government, and with a population that sees itself as a distinct nation which is recognized as the source of the state's sovereignty. Historian Benedict Anderson has described the modern nation as an imagined community, imagined as a community since regardless of regional variation and internal inequalities, the nation is always conceived as “a deep horizontal comradeship” capable of generating “colossal sacrifices” on the part of its members.¹ Another feature of the nation state—at least in its prototypical form on which the others are based—is a common language and culture.

There are of course many variations on this theme. Some countries give only lip service, or even less, to representative government and the rule of law, and others, such as the former possessions of European powers in Africa and parts of Asia, are divided by internal ethnic and linguistic divisions. Such countries use the language of the former colonial power as the language (or co-language) of administration, as well as an internal lingua franca; and outside the country, as a medium of wider communication. Their sense of national unity therefore lies not in language and culture, but is derived from their earlier resistance to a colonial

¹Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

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authority, and by their recognition as independent sovereign countries within the wider international system.

In any case, the core of communal consciousness, which is vital for the realization of a nation state, resides in what sociologist Anthony D. Smith calls the myth-symbol complex, which embodies the beliefs and sentiments of the national community.² Myth in this sense does not mean an erroneous belief, but rather a means of imposing coherence on the myriad events of the past and on those of current experience, while simultaneously telling the story of who we are, where we came from, what makes us different from other nations, and where we hope the trajectory of history and our own collective efforts will take us. This historical memory is preserved and transmitted to future generations in both the written record and in the various stories told in different ways in folklore, popular culture, literature, and art; these are images and stories which are fundamental in imagining the nation as a community. It is also seen in artefacts in museums, among the sites of historical events, in the statues, paintings, monuments, patriotic music and commemorations that remind us of, and depict the events and the people that have made history, and in the telling, emphasizing the specific values of the national community.

In the 1980s, when the Cold War ended, and the world opened up to truly global interactions, a new way of viewing the world began to take shape. This new perspective began with questions as to the validity of the status quo in the rapidly changing international system, asking if perhaps it wasn't time to rethink state sovereignty and national borders, and to focus instead on the development of some system of global governance. On a continental scale this kind of thinking has produced the still evolving European Union, and beyond that the emergence of what is known as globalism, the ideology of a small but wealthy and influential transnational elite which calls for unrestricted commerce and mass migration, thus the diminution and the eventual abolition of national sovereignty and borders.

If instigated, such a system would mean the reversion to empire (defined as a collection of countries or states under a single overarching authority) much like the mercantilist colonial systems of the not too distant past. The colonial powers at that time proudly called their network of foreign possessions and subsidiaries "empires" after the Roman Empire of Antiquity and its predecessors. Since then, the words "imperialism" and "imperialist" have been demonized and are used today not only as designations, but also as terms that demean and attack one's opponents. Yet these two varieties of transnational dominance are both fruits from the same tree, no matter what name one uses to designate them.

²Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (Blackwell: Oxford and Cambridge, 1986).

The ideology of globalization, which now challenges the nation state status quo, is inherently undemocratic and revolutionary. In this respect it corresponds to another older transnational ideology, Marxism, whose effects are seen today in the country's universities, an institution which has been transformed from a free marketplace of ideas, where objective critical thinking and aesthetic appreciation are taught, and where truth-seeking research is conducted, to an institution of indoctrination and social activism based on an anti-Western doctrine. This shift began during the student unrest of the 1960s under the influence of the New Left, an offshoot of Marxist ideology which demoted the Old Left's concern with economic inequality in favor of focusing on race, gender, and sexuality. The nation state stands in the cross-hairs of both of those different but overlapping ideologies in their campaigns to rewrite history and to impose on the population their own kinds of imagined communities.

Globalists label any resisters to their movement "populist," regardless of their motives, deflecting the meaning of the word from "those who defend the concerns and interests of ordinary people against the elite" to an invective. The same was done with the words "imperialism" and "imperialist," which parallels what the Left has done with the terms "racist" and "racism," in this case extending their application to an improbable extent which robs them of their potency. These are the kinds of terms that Orwell describes as meaningless, as they no longer have referential value but are used only to attack one's enemies, what S. I. Hayakawa calls "snarl words."

Forces have been building on the left for quite some time for an eventual takeover of the cultural institutions in the United States, a method and a goal which student radical Rudi Dutschke described in the 1960s as "the long march through the institutions to capture the culture." For to call those disparate groups the "Left" is only to acknowledge their common roots in Marxism. But like any community of faith the "Left" drifts off into separate sects over time, each emphasizing different aspects of the core ideology. In the present case there are those who have no ideological understanding, but are sympathetic to the stated goals of the activists, and who act as their enablers, what Lenin called "useful idiots." Then there are the Marxist inspired groups which have in common opposition to the status quo and a commitment to transform it. They range from those which work to achieve that goal from within the cultural institutions, to those that concentrate on violence. What they all have in common is the exploitation of fissures in American society created by race and of any disparities that still might exist between the sexes.

One of the entities in that category is Antifa, a loose coalition of groups with no officially formal organization, whose members come from the

political left—Communists, socialists, and anarchists—and with an ideology that rejects both liberal democracy and the features of what constitute the modern nation state, which they lump together under the label “Fascist.” Their name comes from the German Communist Party’s *Antifaschistische Aktion* which during the tumultuous days of the Weimar Republic engaged in bloody street brawls with their counterparts from the National Socialist German Worker’s Party known as the Brown Shirts. Antifa has been active since the 1970s, most recently taking advantage of peaceful demonstrations to vandalize buildings and attacking people.

Another group that brings their fight to the streets calls itself Black Lives Matter. Its organizers have said openly that they operate within an ideological framework and that they are trained Marxists. Among the causes they espouse, besides those dealing with race, are globalism and opposition to capitalism, as well as the usual social movements of feminism (with the goal of “freedom from male-centeredness”), what they call “queer affirming,” and the socialist utopian notion of a collective community. Towards that end they state on one of their websites that they “at press there are reports that this wording has been scrubbed from BLM websites without explanation.” They have taken the slogan “black lives matter” as their name, exploiting and enlarging on racial grievances, and winning the sympathy of well-meaning middle class whites in their campaign, for one often sees Black Lives Matters signs on houses in middle class neighborhoods and as bumper stickers on their cars.

Activist groups began their campaign of deconstructing the way the nation is imagined with the easy target of the Confederacy, by desecrating and tearing down statues of Confederate figures, supposedly as protests against honoring men who 160 years ago had supported a slave owning part of the country. They quickly moved on to destroying monuments to Founding Fathers George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, with the excuse that they had been slave owners. They pressured the directors of the Museum of Natural History in New York City to remove a bronze equestrian statue of Theodore Roosevelt because the Indian and black man beside him are on foot, disregarding the fact that Roosevelt, despite criticism at the time, had invited Booker T. Washington to the White House, the first African American ever to have been the guest of a president in the White House. They pulled down the statue of Hans Christian Heg in the university town of Madison, Wisconsin. Heg was an immigrant, an abolitionist activist, and commanding officer of the Scandinavian 15th Wisconsin Volunteer Regiment, who died in the Battle of Chicamauga in 1863. They also desecrated the monument in Boston Commons dedicated to the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, the first black volunteer regiment which

fought for the Union in the Civil War. They even went after Abraham Lincoln, the man who freed the slaves; Ulysses S. Grant, the general who defeated the Confederacy; and Frederick Douglass, an escaped slave, social reformer, abolitionist, orator, writer, suffragist, and statesman, whose autobiographies stand among the greatest written documents of human liberty and the destruction of American slavery.

This assault on American history, and thus the way the nation is imagined, is also seen in the educational system of the country, especially in higher education, but also in a trend that is becoming ever more apparent in the curricula and the textbooks of the public schools. The most blatant move in this direction is the recent *New York Times's* 1619 Project which relocates the nation's founding from 1776 and the Declaration of Independence, to 1619, the year the first slaves from Africa arrived. This event, say the proponents of the project, is the real founding, for the land that over half a century later would become the United States is asserted to be inherently racist and should thus be rejected in toto. Distinguished historians have objected to this distortion of history, yet its false assertions have been incorporated into the curricula of schools all over the country.

The globalist vision of a post-national, borderless world depends on the deconstruction of the nation which forms the basis of the independent sovereign state with borders. This deconstruction is well underway in the United States by activists motivated by an ideology which in many ways is antithetical to the neo-liberalism of the globalist elite. This movement enlists people in many walks of life who either respond positively to the slogans of the Left, or who submit without protest. And so, we see today, people of different ethnic, racial, and occupational backgrounds, but mostly whites who have passed through the country's colleges and universities, marching to the sound of another drummer under the banner of "social justice" or some other clichéd slogan, or marching simply to keep pace with the others. They march away from the past in which they have prospered, and in which they have enjoyed their inherited freedoms, and towards what they assume will be a bright future, but which leads to some kind of new imperial order whose eventual reality we can only guess at.