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PEOPLE, NATION, STATE, NATION-STATE, NATIONALISM

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Distinguishing the exact definition of ethnic group, people and nation can be challenging among the countless descriptions of these terms. The following definition of *people* is a good example of its confusable feature: people:

- race, tribe, nation
- one social class, people forming one particular state
- non-patrician individuals, not being in a high rank or position.<sup>1</sup>

The Révai-lexicon deals with peoples, nations and nationalities when discussing the topic of the ethnic groups of the World. The state can be defined as ‘...the community of people, settled in one particular area, in possession of the ability to take action and willpower.’<sup>2</sup> Ignác Romsics’s definition of the ethnic group– in our point of view – is identical with the definition of people: ‘...the cohabitation of biologically, culturally, territorially separated parentage-groups which do not yet possess the features of a nation, but have the opportunity to become one.’<sup>3</sup>

According to this school of thought, in the multinational area of East-Central Europe, on the turn of the 18 and 19<sup>th</sup> century, only peoples were present from whom a handful of forward-looking nobles tried to ‘form’ a nation.<sup>4</sup> The first step would have been the creation of a proper language fulfilling all the requirements of the era. Although, in the kingdoms with complete social structures, the orders established a national identity with close relation to the king and their local area, for centuries, the phrase ‘*natio hungarica*’ and ‘*natio polonica*’ only referred to the patriarchy, regardless of their mother language. This line of thought leads us to the distinction of people and nation: nation is a higher level of people in quality and cannot be separated from the notion of the state.<sup>5</sup> The Hornby-dictionary defines ‘nation’ as: ‘...a large community of individuals, usually speaking one common language and usually unified in their political features and aims’.<sup>6</sup> Marx, Engels and the Austro-Marxists (O. Bauer, H. Steinacker), and later Hugh Seton-Watson<sup>7</sup> make a distinction between the old historical nations, and the ‘peasant’ nations lacking historical background. Nations possessing an own kingdom or state with separate feudal social classes such as the English, Scottish, Portuguese, Danish, Swedish, Hungarians, Polish, Russians, (Czech and Croatian) belong to the first group, as well as the Germans and Italians with a long, glorious, strong citizenship and leadership. The second group consists of the Finnish, Balt, Ukrainian-Rusyn, Slovakian, Slovenian, Romanian nations among which a few, for example the Serbians and Bulgarians may have a medieval statehood and glorious historical past, but after 500 years of the Ottoman rule and losing their nobility and nationality, they had no choice but fighting their wars of liberation as ‘peasant’ societies.

Giving examples of nowadays: the Basks, the Gaulish, the Sorbians, the Rusyns and the Kurdish are peoples that have not been given the chance of establishing a separate state, therefore they have to live as an ethnic minority within the framework of one or more foreign states. Forming a separate state helps a people to become a nation more quickly. At the moment, this process can be observed in Ukraine and – in a less successful way – in Belorussia as well.

<sup>1</sup> A.S. Hornby...The Advanced Lerner’s Dictionary of Current English 2nd edition Oxford University Press 1970 p.720

<sup>2</sup> Budapest, 1936 26., 721.o.

<sup>3</sup> *Nemzet, nemzetiség és állam*. Napvilág, Bp. 1998. p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> According to my beloved academic Professor, Emil Niederhauser, the Slovenian nation was ‘made up’ by white-collar people, and by this accused the Polish Stadion Earl with creating the (at that time non-existent) Ukrainian -Rusin nation.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Nation’ in English, especially in American English, can mean both, which causes many issues for us to understand.

<sup>6</sup> Hornby i.m. p. 648

<sup>7</sup> *Nations and States*. Methuen, London 1977. pp. 7-9.

‘...The French were the first European people to form a nation...the French nation was brought up by the French monarchy and the French state.’<sup>8</sup> – this shows the very difference between the feature of becoming a nation in West and East (Central) Europe. In the centre on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, the absolute royal established the strong French, English and Dutch state, and the French, English and Dutch nations were formed in that state.<sup>9</sup> On the periphery, meaning Central and Eastern Europe, in the multinational Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian Empire, the two main goals of the unifying and nation-establishing efforts of the peoples were modernisation (catching up with Western Europe) and the establishment of an independent nation-state.<sup>10</sup> From this feature derives the difference between the notions of ‘nation’ in the east and the west: civic nation, referring to the Anglo-French evolution of the nations, in strong connection with the state and area, and ethnic nation, based on the origins, languages and traditions in the East. The former is also referred to as the French definition of nations, and the latter as the German one. The reason is the same: the royal, revolutionary and then Napoleonic state creates the French political nation based on citizenship. The Germans and Italians lived separated in multiple states, while the Slovenians, Hungarians, Polish, Ukrainians and Finnish lived in a more and more hostile imperial framework of states unusual for them, therefore they had to define their people-and-national separation and self-identity despite it. The characteristics of these elements can be observed in their origins, traditions but mostly in their languages<sup>11</sup> (cultural nation).

Numerous people – including Herder – consider the nation derived from the divines and refer to the Hebrew and Greek folklore. The perennialists – ethnicists and the modernists explain the origins of the nations differently. The former group – including Hans Kohn, John A. Armstrong<sup>12</sup>, Anthony D. Smith<sup>13</sup> consider the linguistic-cultural-religious community, origin-myths, collective-memories, traditions, common values and symbols as major evidence. Based on these, they mention ‘core-ethnic-communities’ and ‘ethnic-states’ in their works. Smith considers ancient Egypt, Byzantium, and the Medieval England<sup>14</sup> belonging to this group, but Solomon’s and his successors’ Jewish state (Israel, Judea) and the Greek Polises can also be mentioned here. The representatives of the modernist school of thinking (Karl Deutsch, Benedict Anderson, E. J. Hobsbawm, E. Gellner) consider nation as the “product” of industrialisation, modernisation, capitalism and the civilisation. This can be agreed on if we consider “modern nation” from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (György Schöpfín) ‘...during the development of the civil society, the nation has gained and took over the legitimating function of religion, and therefore, the notions of modern citizen-state and nation were connected inseparably during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.’<sup>15</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson, quotes the definition of nation ascribed to Stalin saying that the characteristic features of it are: common language and territory, common economic way of life and the common so-called mental-makeup.<sup>16</sup> Under similar point of view the features of the nation are: kinship/a sense of belonging, common territory, history, culture, collective self-consciousness and religion.<sup>17</sup>

‘...the modern nations are the ‘fabrications’ of states, rather than the other way around’<sup>18</sup>

‘...the (nation)state is the modern legitimate form of power: it forms citizens out of the plebs (dependants), within a unified cultural framework.’<sup>19</sup>

This we cross a line, which does not exist according to many, between nation and state. According to Max Webber, the state is: “...a community of human individuals successfully requiring the monopoly of the

<sup>8</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson op.cit. pp. 42.44

<sup>9</sup> In the case of England, at the same time with the formation of the Empire, was British nation formed, uniting English, Scotch and Welsh nation.

<sup>10</sup> Guibernau’s nation definition: ‘...strong political community of people/folk, talking a common language or having a common religion or having similar everyday routine or in possession of political memory or a state, or willing to create one.’ *Nationalisms – The Nation-State and Nationalism in the 20th century*. Cambridge-Oxford 1996 p.34

<sup>11</sup> The Hungarian nation-ideal at this time, - from Joseph the II. until the Compromise of 1867- has two faces: linguistic and cultural against the centralised ‘germanisation’; and state-national against the ethnical groups. The nation definition created by Deák and Eötvös is identical with the French one; after Trianon and the disintegration of the Country, the definition of the cross border cultural-nation has become common in the intellectual life and politics.

<sup>12</sup> The suggestive title of the much argued book is: *Nations before Nationalism*. 1982

<sup>13</sup> *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Blackwell, Oxford 1986

<sup>14</sup> Smith op.cit. pp 14-17, 107-109.

<sup>15</sup> Gergely Egedy: *Bevezetés a nemzetközi kapcsolatok elméletébe*. Bp. HVGORAC 2007. p. 63.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. pp. 3-4

<sup>17</sup> Armstrong op.cit. p 129

<sup>18</sup> Armstrong op.cit. p 129

<sup>19</sup> György Schöpfín: *Nemzetfogalom és Európa* (lecture, 29.14.2002.) He and Gellner also has given huge significance to the Protestantism, which by the spreading of the writing and reading, ‘has formed a peasant dialect to a real language’ E. Gellner: *Nationalism* London 1997. pp 76-77

legitimate use of physical strength/violence... only the state can ensure the survival of many cultural values unique for nation(s)...the function of the state is the social division of labour and the centralised law enforcement.”<sup>20</sup> To summarise the numerous definitions of state in literature: ‘...the state is a jurisdictional and political organisation working within a clearly defined geographical area which deals with the different matters of its inhabitants for their loyalty and obedience (usually forced out by power) .’ Nation-state means a state the population of which is more or less ethnically homogenous (ethnically-linguistically).<sup>21</sup> According to George Brunner, in a nation-state the ratio of the minorities cannot exceed 10% of the population. He also introduces another phrase that is the ‘nationality state’, where the most numerous nation (nationality) does not exceed 50% of the whole population of the state.<sup>22</sup> The post-First WW Peace Treaties – according to the victors – created nation-states within the territory of the former Austria-Hungary. In reality, only Austria and Hungary became one, the other successor states only ‘inherited’ the former Monarchy’s ethnic consistence with all its problems.<sup>23</sup> Even nowadays, it can be a source of serious internal and foreign conflicts, if a state with significant minorities tries to homogenise itself by force with the aim of becoming a nation-state (Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine). Public education, the mass communication and the military forces can establish and sustain a nation-state. The nation-state is a temporal organisation of a nation's power which is always weakened and disorganised by the (ethno)regionalism from below and by the integration organizations (EU) and globalisation from the above. Therefore it is constantly losing from its strength and grounds as the framework of political, economic, social and cultural way of life.<sup>24</sup> ‘...The international integration of markets requires the establishment of supra-national organisations... The national interest is not in harmony with the interest of sustaining nation-states any more...’<sup>25</sup>

A multitude of books have dealt with the origins of nationalism and its constructive and destructive features from the above- mentioned authors as well.<sup>26</sup> According to Hugh Seton-Watson, nationalism has two meanings: on the one hand, it is a doctrine on the features, interests, rights and duties of nations; while on the other hand, it is an organised political movement aiming to help the nationalities reach their goals and meet their interests.<sup>27</sup> ‘... Nationalism is an inevitable, or at least natural output of modernisation in close relation with the rise of the industrial society... it is a political principle with the aim of creating political and national unity. Mass communication and culture are its carrier and distributor it is the product of the state the necessary precondition of its appearance is the existence of the state. Nationalism is supported by the states as a means of homogenisation that intensifies the public sense of belonging.’<sup>28</sup> The aim of nationalism is institutionalisation on a national basis (Zoltán Kántor).<sup>29</sup> Nationalism can have a unifying-state-supporter role, and a deconstructive-secessionist role as well. Many examples can be found in the past and in the future, too.

The aim of the nationalism(s), even nowadays, is the creation of a homogeneous nation-state. In 1789 most of the citizens of the French kingdom did not speak French;<sup>30</sup> the French political nation was created by ‘linguistic and political terror’. Some states – considering themselves nation states even in their constitution – are still using these methods (Romania, Slovakia). There are no homogeneous nation states in Europe any more. Due to the large number of immigrants, the former nation states (Ireland, Portugal and Luxembourg) has become multinational as well.

<sup>20</sup> Quotes Gellner’s: *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford-Cambridge 1994 p.3

<sup>21</sup> Romsics op.cit. p.14

<sup>22</sup> Example: the former member states of the Soviet Union, today’s India, Nigéria. *Nemzetiségi kérdés és kisebbségi konfliktusok Kelet-Európában*. TLA Bp. 1995. p 12.

<sup>23</sup> Kosáry Domokos: A nemzetállam és jövője In: *Közép-európai olvasókönyv*. Szerk. Módos Péter. Osiris Bp. 2005. p 203.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Neither the nations, nor the states exists in every time and under every circumstances...’ Gellner 1994. p.6.

<sup>25</sup> Statement of János Kis, co-founder of the SzDSz, stated 1997. Quotes: Ágoston Székhelyhidi *Nemzet és rendszerváltás*. Antológia Lakitelek 2007. p 216.

<sup>26</sup> Also: E.J. Hobsbawm: *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge 1990.

P.R. Brass: *Ethnicity and Nationalism*. NewDelhi-London 1991.

R. Caplan – J. Feffner (ed): *Europe’s New Nationalism – States and Minorities in Conflict*. Oxford 1996

M.E. Brown (and others, ed): *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*. MIT Press Cambridge, Mass 1997.

<sup>27</sup> Hugh Seton-Watson op.cit. p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Gellner 1994 pp. 1-4.

<sup>29</sup> Similar to a former statement of Gellner’s ‘...The nationalism is not the nation awakening to self-consciousness, quite the opposite: it creates nations, where they have not existed before.’ Quotes: A. Lieven: *Mi is a nemzet? Európai Szemle*, 1998/4

<sup>30</sup> Occitan, Catalonians, Basks, Bretons, Flamands, Corsican Italians, Elsass people.

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