

POSTMODERN THEORIES AND NEW NATIONALISMS OF THE WEST.
THE IDEAL-TYPICAL CASE OF SCOTLAND

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(Abstract)

The paper investigates the social-political background of the Western nationalist movements, which, although accountable for the balkanization process going on in these societies, in the meantime have become desecuritized, that is, not perceived as a national security threat anymore. In this context the case of Scotland is ideal-typical.

This process, highly erosive to the integrity of state structures is explained by researchers in accordance with the territorial and political transformation inherent in economic globalization, the democratic culture spreading simultaneously with decolonization, and the permissive liberalism coupled with the welfare egoism of the host states. These factors together are responsible for the globalization of both state and nationalism, as well as for the institutionalization of postmodern, post-national, and post-hegemonic forms of power sharing.

Keywords: Western nationalism, postmodern nationalism, neo-nationalism, globalization, Scottish independence referendum, devolution, social-political fragmentation

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Introduction

Apropos of my study is the Scottish independence vote to be held on the 18th of September, 2014. Because of its post-modern, post-national, and postcolonial traits, a number of researchers are considering the Scottish movement, along with other ethnonationalist movements that have surfaced in the western states since the sixties, a separate class of phenomena.¹ The term used to denote these movements is *neo-nationalism* (sometimes *new nationalism*), suggesting a temporal and, what is more, a regional-geographical cleavage.

Although there exist such movements outside the UK, for example in Canada, Belgium, Spain and Italy, the one in Scotland deserves exceptional attention not solely because of the vibrant political debates, drafts, and legal opinions currently pervading the international media and the British public sphere, but because of

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¹ One can resume this line adding post-hegemony, post-militarism, post-liberalism, post-westphalianism. Hungarian researchers have already been interested in the postmodern interpretation of Scottish devolution (see Grüber 1998).

the critical proximity of the referendum itself. Moreover, researchers of Western nationalist movements found puzzling the weirdly tolerant - "post-national" - attitude undertaken by British politicians towards the "independence" of the historical regions of the country.² Under these circumstances, the situation in Scotland is currently the most ideal-typical compared to the other counterparts.

Such a degree of tolerance and the *desecuritization* of the policy concerning all aspects of the home-rule is typical, beside Britain, only for Canada out of the listed areas, where, under the pressure of the Quebecois independence movement, secession and its conditions have become legally regulated issues.³ However, this issue has not been back on the agenda since 1995, when the Quebec independence referendum failed only due to a missing half percent of vote.⁴ The lack of this permissive constitutional regulation and post-national politics distinguishes the Scottish case from the Catalonian independence referendum scheduled on the same week for benefiting "spill-over" effect, albeit Catalans enjoy a larger popular support and their action is characterized by not less politicization and mediatization than Scottish.⁵

As opposed to the Scottish, Quebecois, or Catalan civic nationalism, one can hardly assign post-national character to the Northern Italian, Flemish, Corsican, or Basque ethnoregional movements. However, welfare solidarity based on economic chauvinism and egoism holds up as a family resemblance among Western and non-Western neo-nationalism. Gingrich and Banks (2006: 3, 15) proposed the criteria of parliamentary representation for a delimitation of neo-nationalist movements from notorious anti-systemic and far right parties. Nevertheless, *economic chauvinism* remains not only the distinguishing characteristic of this phenomenon, but is the factor which may start up an isomorphic spillover process beyond liberal, Anglo-Saxon regions.

The author of this paper believes that due to this spillover accompanying globalization, and completed by the export of Western techniques of governance and power sharing, as well the voluntary imitation of the periphery, the institutions of social-political fragmentation, including neo-nationalism, will gradually break to the surface in non-Western regions, too. By their occurrence the older forms of nationalism will be outmoded. In a similar manner, Tom Nairn (2003 [1977]: 73) called nationalism the "threshold of modernity" through which the Roman god Janus gazed into past and future.⁶ Certainly, this precarious faith in "global balkanization" (Rand 1977) nourishes the largely recognized visions, though so far unfinished project of political postmodernity.

Methodological territorialism and path dependence in the theories of nationalism

Is nationalism a movement, an ideology, *Volksgeist*, or the imprint of the economic, technological and industrial conditions which are responsible for the development of national societies within a territorial state

² See for example the official document entitled [Scotland in the Union](#) (page 5), signed by Prime Minister John Major in 1993 affirmed the "no nation can be held irrevocably in a Union against its will". Beside the [Edinburgh Agreement](#), legalizing the upcoming Scottish referendum, the [Good Friday Agreement](#) of 1998 recognized the possibility of Irish unification. This last document firmly and explicitly recognizes the possibility "to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish".

³ The [judgment](#) given by Supreme Court of Canada created a legal basis for Quebecois secessionist politics. This decision was founded on the four basic principles present in the Canadian Constitution, i.e. federalism, democracy, the rule of law, and respect for minorities. The Court declared that albeit the principle of democracy is not incompatible with secession, the other three principles restrict its unilateral application. The reference recognized that the "rights of other provinces and the federal government cannot deny the right of the government of Quebec to pursue secession, should a clear majority of the people of Quebec choose that goal, so long as in doing so, Quebec respects the rights of others" (section 92). Given these conditions the majority have the obligation to participate in negotiations in good faith. On this basis the Parliament has adopted the [Clarity Act](#), the law to give effect the reference of the Court and circumscribing the requirement of clarity of the popular will as expressed in the referendum question.

⁴ As reported by [Angus Reid](#) opinion poll agency, in 2013 42% of Quebecois supported, 49% rejected Quebec independence. Obviously, this situation has changed after the defeat of the pro independence Parti Quebecois by the unionist Liberal Party in the recent elections of April, 2014.

⁵ [Catalan New Agency](#) (10.02.2014) reported 53,5% would vote „yes" and only 28,7% would vote „no" on an independence referendum. Conversely, Prime Minister Rajoy affirmed on government's official [website](#) the government will not negotiate about, neither authorize the September referendum.

⁶ Due to its belatedness, Nairn portrays this doorway as „dark passage" (op.cit 73). His pessimism is deepened by a reference to Walter Benjamin's apocalyptic vision about the Angel of History, with face turned toward the past, failing to refit pieces resulted from past, seen as a single huge catastrophe.

system? If one gives in to a similar temptation aiming at the simplification of nationalism to any key sociological term, we have to take note of the increasingly popular standpoint according to which nationalism is a paradigm or methodology, reminding us the *more geometrico* of Descartes or Spinoza.

It would be a big mistake to interpret this “methodological paradigm” as a sterile academic tendency. Instead, it is the very capacity to delimit the object of knowledge to which economic, legal, political, and moral categories are applied, or referred to. In our case this is the very question of defining “people” or “society”. Later we will see how the range of possible answers provided by different trends or schools is limited by choosing sample countries upon which to build “theories”.⁷

There is a widespread suspicion that nationalism studies, or more generally, suppositions about nationhood follow a path dependent track in which “national” and “territorial” characters of societies are mutually amplified. Accordingly, this paradigm is heavily decisive in discourses about stateless nations and minorities confined in larger societies, i.e. host states, although some recent nationalism researchers made serious efforts in order to grasp “nationalism reframed” (Brubaker 1996) under conditions of “global age” (Smith 1995).

Nonetheless Brubaker’s focus is restricted to the Post-Soviet region, wherefore he had no intention to extend the problem of “the institutional constitution of both interest and actors” on Western Europe. Brubaker, having an excellent local knowledge about Eastern Europe, set up a triangular model having as corners national minorities legally confined in nationalizing host states, albeit by ethnonational, historical affiliation they belong to external “motherlands”. Although Brubaker considered this transborder institutional space as a new frame for understanding nationalism, he subordinated the relationships between these actors to the new borders settled in the beginnings of the nineties, ultimately to the orthodox form of territorial integrity norm. Because the above-mentioned focus and a perceptible dose of Euroscepticism, Brubaker overlooked the disintegrative nationalist movements of West and the notable pro-EU orientation of their leaders. The development of the newly stiffened borders on the ruins of the former socialist federations following ethnic lines gave him the impression that “far from moving *beyond* the nation-state, history - European history at least - was moving *back* to the nation-state” (Brubaker 1996: 2).

Like Brubaker, Anthony D. Smith, another well known nationalism researcher and author of a monograph on the issue of “ethnic revival” (Smith 1981) took up a modernist conception of society and politics, not a self-evident stance in the case of a scholar working at the deconstruction of cultural modernity by tracing it back to its ancient pre-modern roots. Despite this fact, in this book Smith (1981: 1) manifested sympathy towards the prophets of liberal and cosmopolitan dreams and their “voices in the wilderness”. It has only been ten years since Smith (1995) engaged in an all-encompassing confrontation with the anthropological implications of a “memory-less culture” and by undertaking an apologetic posture aiming at the “defence of nation”.⁸

The theoretical position of these two scholars, chosen for the exemplification of the path dependence of nationalism theories is symptomatic. Their train of thought is convergent since both of them place emphasis on the continuous presence of nationalism, rather than “revival” of some forms of it, which makes them conclude that there is no way to bypass modernity. As a working hypothesis they relied heavily on a simplified notion of political globalization, which is, the *supranational* political community as the solely existing structural alternative to the nation state system. By destroying this straw man, *tertium non datur*, they anchored to the old theoretical paradigm which confers a regressive meaning to the process of *subnational* fragmentation.

Against this mainstream position there is an alternative interpretation of nationalism which places the issue of social integration and cultural identity in the changing context of welfare state globalization, *tertium datur*, breaking away from the old frame of state building and industrialization explanations for the evolution of nationalism from the 19th century onward. The cornerstone of this new paradigm is the international system built up mainly from small states and some form of transnational governance providing stability to

⁷ A well known example is the melting pot model of multiculturalism, having as sample country the USA. Contrary to this, the patchwork model as conceptualized by the above cited Geertz (2002), Appadurai (2006: 111) emphasizes the role of Nigeria, India, Indonesia and the Western states targeted by emigrants. Postmodern oriented theories of neo-nationalism generally are excluding the world outside of the developed Western states from sight, while others (Ignatieff 1993, Kaldor 1996) are considering this process on a larger scale, including for example the grotesque relations of the Balkan wars, as portrayed in movies directed by Emir Kusturica.

⁸ „In conclusion – wrote Smith (1995: 153) in a chapter entitled *In Defence of the Nation* – I want to set out briefly three arguments which together suggest both a qualified defence of the plural order of the nations and the likelihood of any early suppression of nations and nationalism. These arguments are: that nationalism politically necessary; that national identity is socially functional; and that the nation is historically embedded”.

the system comprising a large number of small actors. Scholars assuming this progressive theoretical framework offer an argument according to which within the most developed Western states globalization has transformed nationalism itself. This conception holds that the process of the globalization of nationalism has changed the political objectives, value system, social base, and even the sources of legitimacy of nationalism. This is why these observers proceeded to call it neo-nationalism.

We had to admit that this new approach grew out as a side-show relative to primordialism or modernism, main trends in nationalism studies. Therefore it could have prevailed in some other branches of social theories, without being able to exert decisive influence upon the mainstream trends of nationalism studies. Be that as it may, and despite of post-theories' eclecticism, this approach is an excellent lens by which to disentangle the relationship between the British polity, a unitary state by definition, but a de facto federation and a de facto empire exerting soft and indirect power.

The beginnings of neo-nationalism theory

A less homogeneous group of researchers defines neo-nationalism solely on a chronological basis as the "newest wave" of nationalism. Exhaustive approach (Tiryakian 1985) and inter-paradigm debate (Smith 1981, 1995) motivate this chronological conception as well as the interest to expand the scope of research of nationalism far beyond the Western world (Ignatieff 1993, Kaldor 1996, Gingrich and Banks 2006).

The focal point of a more convergent approach towards post-national interpretation of neo-nationalism is *The Break Up of Britain – Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* of Tom Nairn. According to the Scottish scholar neo-nationalism does not resemble its third world counterpart, neither 19th century national awakening movements against which "a careful consideration shows its different place in history, and its different character and potential" and why "it deserves to be called «neo-nationalism», rather than nationalism" (Nairn 2003: 116). The notable difference between the nationalism of the 19th century and ours is that through capitalist development the earlier absolute deprivation has become relative by a significant accumulation of wealth, which is the case Scotland's immense oil reserve. However this accumulation was still not able to eliminate the social tension. Expectations in these relatively less developed regions are even more accentuated, wherefore their political elites necessarily "resort to populism" (op.cit. 327).

The core of Nairn's sociological, politico-economical analysis had been shared by his reviewers, well known researchers from diverse schools of nationalism studies. This core thus became the nucleus of neo-nationalism theories. For example the functionalist Ernest Gellner (1978: 107-108) underlined the role of mobility and the maturation of a political culture based on egalitarianism. According to Gellner this explains the intolerance towards inequality also in relations between peoples. Thus Gellner found Nairn's theory also valid in explaining Northern-Irish and Scottish Highlander movements.

Although Eric Hobsbawm's biting critique targeted some aspect of "Marxist praxis", nevertheless he echoed the same macrosociological conditions as Nairn in his explanation of nationalism. Although in his description Hobsbawm attributes a pejorative connotation to "balkanization"⁹, he recognized the actual trend of the increase in the number of states in the international system which has been characterized before by fewer and larger states. In agreement with Nairn, he claims the social-political changes occurred in time enhanced greatly the viability of smaller states. Thus, says Hobsbawm, there is no *a priori* possibility today to forbid stateless nations to engage in their own state building process, regardless whether they are Corsicans, inhabitants of Western-Sahara, Isle of Man, or the Channel Islands, although a century ago entities like Danzig Free City and the Central American small states had been judged as an "abortion" or a "joke".

Specific to all neo-nationalism theories, Hobsbawm attributes the change in the assessment of the status of the small state to the territory integrity norm in the UN state system and nuclear deterrence, as well as to new conditions of wealth accumulation and production of welfare. This process has engendered a visible

⁹ On one side he exerted his critics in the name of a pragmatically selective, realistic Marxism. „Few Marxist have argued that *no* nationalist movement can be supported, none that *all* automatically serve this purpose and therefore always to be supported" (op.cit 10). Having at sight the likely collapse of the Labour Party and the radical transformation of the party system in rump-England with a sway toward rightist dominance, as a Marxist, Hobsbawm had found detrimental the breakup of Britain. On the other side his critics pointed at Nairn's (op.cit 317) provocative assertion claiming that "theory of nationalism represents Marxism great historical failure". Hobsbawm (op.cit 21) rejected that social-political fragmentation can be elevated to a "world norm", useful for predicting future. Ultimately, he thought Nairn "puts Marxism at the mercy of nationalism" (op.cit 22), for which he had not "made a useful or convincing contribution to the understanding of nationalism" (op.cit 21).

self-confidence to small states since Seychelles Island or Kuwait enjoy equality in international forums, and welfare in Singapore or Abu Dhabi exceeds the scale of welfare in many other countries of their continents.¹⁰

Despite the over-emphasized methodological differences the same world view shows up in Smith's monograph, *The Ethnic Revival*. In his critical remarks he disapproved of Nairn's and others' neo-nationalism approaches because they placed "disproportionate weight upon economic and economically oriented factors" (op.cit 4), losing sight of the cultural, psychological and social-political ones. His aim is no more than to bring these forgotten factors back to analysis and somewhat restrict the function of the economics, relegating them to the role of "catalysts, triggers, and contributory factors" (op.cit 5).¹¹

It is symptomatic that in the absence of a fully elaborated theory of ethnosymbolism, Smith (1981) recurs to the structuralist explanation used by the criticized modernists. Among these structural conditions he most of all emphasized the decline of colonialist empires. According to Smith this caused an inward turning of these societies, loss of confidence, and the discovery of their own minorities and internal borders. The geopolitical balance after the Suez Crisis provided the experience of "disarmed state" for minorities and "political contraction" for the middle sized states (op.cit 166). The demobilization of colonial administration staff released a large stratum of unemployed state officials, many of whom found his/her vocation as a "surplus expertise" of nationalist movements. Besides, on a more general level of explication, Smith has diagnosed a certain role to the broad social conditions recorded by different "post" theories, like disappearance of overt class conflicts, and attenuation of the role of church and religion in the whole society, but also a widespread perception of social anomie, all of them favoring the coming of nationalism out to the fore.

Given these circumstances, western neo-nationalism has brought on an apparently novel agenda dominated by internal self-determination and above all, the issue of wealth distribution. By contrast with other supporters of neo-nationalism, Smith strongly favored relativisation of this novel nature included in the very expression. In this manner he alluded to the compromise between permissive liberalism and a notable flexibility in Western political systems, on one side, and the freezing of border changes by recognizing the territorial integrity norm as the supreme rule of the international system, on the other. While the first gave minorities notable room for maneuver, the second imposed a major limitation. Under these conditions Western nationalism has been following a much softer agenda than third world nationalism does. The second argument for relativity is chronological continuity which according to Smith can be antedated earlier than it is usually thought, back to the First World War. Smith assumed there exists a "typological continuity" (op.cit 146) even in places, like Cornwall or Provence, where nationalist movements obviously did not exist before. As a third reason for relativity, Smith is deeply mistrustful towards a solely economic agenda, which he systematically interprets as a disguise of older cultural projects.¹² Despite all these critical remarks, which it is possible to render according to the phrase "*old wine in new bottles*," Smith (ibid.) agrees these movements "deserve the label of «neo-nationalism»", adopting it as a terminus technicus.

Theoretical convergence with other branches of social theory

There are some parallel discourses within some branches of social sciences other than nationalism studies whose convergence deepen the findings of the previous chapter explaining the birth of neo-nationalism. The most important of them puts the discourse of social-politic fragmentation touched on above by Nairn and Hobsbawm in a wider context. One can observe the purification from negative connotation, but also the enlarging the scope of this concept initially referring to the state secession and disintegration of empires, as well as embracing the analysis of the *multilevel and polycentric social systems with a higher level of entropy*

¹⁰ At this point Hobsbawm identify himself with dependency theories, claiming that neocolonialist transnational economic circles prefer the optimal situation „in which the number of official sovereign states is maximized and their average strength – i.e. the power effectively to impose the conditions under which foreign power and foreign capital will have to operate – is minimized” (op.cit. 8).

¹¹ In his later book, the *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* Smith reiterates the issue of neo-nationalism. Incapable to escape from it, he assigned again a role, albeit an intermediate one, to economics in the formation of class roles, especially the secular intelligentsia, important because „their needs, preoccupations, and aspirations have tended to dictate the goals and strategies of ethnic nationalism” (Smith 1995: 73).

¹² Smith denounces as unrealistic all social, welfare, ecological agenda, making up Western neo-nationalist political projects, as well as their social democratic aspiration, which „rather, it is a shot through with streaks of neo-romanticism, and placed within a cultural framework which draws for its sustenance upon longstanding historic legacy and identity” (Smith 1981: 179).

and their correspondents in global politics or western political and administrative systems. In this respect remarkable effort has been invested to describe the ways global and local relations are constituted (Robertson 1995), and how the different forms of the flexible (“network” and “transnational”) governance bring about the distribution or even diffusion of power. The research on the “governance without government” (Rosenau 2006), the “polycentric polity” (Scholte 2005) or the “postmodern state”¹³ (Cooper 2002) took up this question. On the whole, these structures and transformation are labeled as *posthegemonic*¹⁴ and *postwestphalian* in international relations theory, overlapping the philosophical¹⁵ term “postmodernism.”

The second parallel discourse harks back to Hobsbawm’s (1977: 7) remark about the *fissiparous nationalism*. Familiar mainly in the field of cultural anthropology, against the idea of “primordialism with macrogeographical base” (Appadurai 2006: 115) this approach stresses that formation of cultural identities is taking place always in a microsocial context. This conception of culture is best portrayed by Geertz’s (2000: 252) definition, according to which culture is a system, in which “it is difficult to find a commonality of outlook... that is not either itself partitioned into smaller, infolding ones, boxes within boxes, or taken up whole and entire into larger, incorporative ones, selves laid on top of selves”.¹⁶ Cultural anthropologists found that globalization is responsible for the breakup of “vertically organized cultures” controlled by the center, as well as their replacement by fragmented and spider web-like cultures. They consider that although the state is hardly in an absolute command position to mold the identities of its citizens, the “minor narcissistic differences” (Appadurai 2006: 10) available in cultures enable their political instrumentalization even in regions lacking strong social polarization.

The third parallel discourse brought into relief the gradual metamorphosis and dissipation of what they called epic politics, and its substitution with a modern *political process based on administration and distribution* (Arendt 1966: 20, Wolin 2004: 522-531). Although for some it might appear too distant as a philosophical theory, as a compass it can reveal the basic differences of political ambitions purported by postmodern societies and less developed “time zones”.¹⁷

The fourth parallel discourse is neotribalism and neomedievalism. They occur not only in the long term trend analyses of international relations, but also among philosophers and highly reputed international jurists. “Tribalism in its postmodern form, is not – as it once was perceived – the exclusive property of so called

¹³ According to the former British and then EU senior foreign policy counselor, postmodern state is beyond the domestic and external dichotomy, favoring mutual openness and interference, accepts mutual vulnerability in the relationship between states (Cooper 2002: 13). However recognizes the norm of the peaceful resolution of conflicts as the highest political rule, Cooper’s (2002: 17-19) reasoning ends up with a claim for a postmodern empire spreading out and institutionalizing the above mentioned relationships. Weakening and dispersion of power is also a central topic in the research of the GWU professor, James Rosenau. He foresees that “with greater numbers of networks and organizations, with people on the move ever more extensively, and with global structures increasingly bifurcated, it seems likely that the contradictory trends toward greater integration and greater fragmentation will continue to accelerate” (Rosenau 2006: 10).

¹⁴ Scholars of international relations devoted great efforts to explain how the post second world war global order is preserved despite the seeming decline the hegemonic power of the US after the oil crisis in the seventies. A well known researcher, the liberal Keohane found that international governance is based on the embeddedness of the international regimes set out by the US as the incontestable hegemonic power after the war. These regimes will survive the hegemonic power, whose power will reside in an asymmetric interdependence between him and the other smaller actors. Keohane (1982: 348) took as granted the fragmented structure of world politics where only the communication channeled by these regimes “could compensate for the increasing fragmentation of power” (op. cit 350).

¹⁵ The most concise exposition of philosophical understanding of postmodernity is developed by David Harvey, the author of *The Condition of Postmodernity*. The “most startling fact about postmodernism: its total acceptance of the ephemerality, fragmentation, discontinuity, and the chaotic”, to which postmodernism responds in very specific way. „It does not try to transcend it, counteract it, or even to define the 'eternal and immutable' elements that might lie within it. Postmodernism swims, even wallows, in the fragmentary and the chaotic currents of change” (Harvey 1989: 44).

¹⁶ For example Geertz (2000: 249) places culture somewhere between a world made of *dots* and *tiles*, similarly to Appadurai (2006: 25-27), who stressed the amorphous character of the “cellular worlds” like culture and global economy vis á vis the “vertebral structures”, most of all, the system of territorial states.

¹⁷ Representatives of neo-nationalism denying postmodernism offer an alternative interpretation to the so called „time zone” conception stressing sharp difference between the developed liberal world and the rest. These scholars rule out the possibility to delimit „time zones” and picture „parochial” nationalism as a substitute to global culture, generally hostile to any aspect of globalization. For Anthony D. Smith (1995: 160) nationalism is a „religion surrogate” conferring „the promise of collective but terrestrial immortality, outfacing death and oblivion”, for Ignatieff (1993: 152) is the „folklore of backwardness”, for Kaldor (1996: 51) the adverse reaction of those „excluded from the benefits of globalization”.

backward peoples. It is now openly flaunted everywhere, unapologetically, with zealously raised arms and firearms” – wrote Thomas Franck (1993: 3).

Princeton philosopher Michal Walzer is another adherent of this systematic approach aiming at the reevaluation of tribalism. Summarizing arguments for and against secession, the communitarian thinker demanded that it “satisfy the members” of tribes, for these loyalties are useful for both minorities and majorities, and the international society, too. He justifies this by affirming that “when identities are multiplied, passions are divided” (Walzer 1994: 194). Thus he has recalled the Madisonian reminiscence on the economy of social-political fragmentation expressed in The Federalist Papers and grafted it in a postmodernist context. Unlike other scholars supporting the idea of secession of movements enjoying large popular support, Walzer accepts the right of secession not as a manifestation of the general will, but as the “political equivalent of toleration for every Church and sect” (op. cit. 193). Secession, modification of borders, federalization, regional autonomy, cultural pluralism all can serve this purpose in the context of the persisting conditions. If those peoples are “let to go”, only some of them will secede. Those breaking away will be given the opportunity to reestablish connections or join freely other communities of interest, Walzer sums up the arguments about the just causes of secession.

Will Kymlicka, the well known multiculturalism expert, drew attention to another element of the process. He found the democratic character of these states the principal factor explaining why this “distinctively western approach” (Kymlicka 2000) towards secession has not become the prisoner of concerns of state security, and what is more, has become desecuritized. The Canadian philosopher considers the democratic standards stressed in these societies is at the same time an obstacle in the obstruction and the repression of secessionist parties and politics operating on a legal basis. These Western multinational states have provided already numerous rights and institutions, which can hardly be extended in the new states. This is why secession has become a question of vanity, says Kymlicka, although he had to admit that it is also important that in these cases the economic vitality of the host states wouldn't be imperiled by territorial changes resulting from secession. Even if this economic condition throws a shadow on an argument based on the primacy of political culture, we can agree with Kymlicka, but also with those who stress the primacy of economics, that the stakes, also the cost of secession, are lower in these western societies.

Social background and political objectives of the new nationalism. Scientific objectification of the discourses

One of the most striking features of neo-nationalism in the face of traditional nationalism is the purpose of the movement and the ideal of national integration. While the old nationalism aimed for national liberation under foreign domination, neo-nationalism renounces unification of the entire cultural nation in one a single state. This is typical of Austrian nationalists, the Northern League's rhetoric against an Italian unitary state, Czech and Slovakian aspirations, and the small state nationalism of the former Yugoslav states or Hungary¹⁸. However, their immediate objectives vary on a large scale including regional autonomy, confederation, inward turning welfare nationalism, or secession, Western nationalism has transcended the politics aiming at territorial enlargement and the instigation to territorial conflict. It is notable in this respect the change of attitude of the Austrian Freedom Party. As researcher Thomas Fillitz (2006: 149) demonstrated, Jörg Haider turned back to those Pan-German forces which helped him to take over the party, and his 1997 party manifest laid a new emphasis on what the party document called the “performance oriented” Austrian community and its cultural freedom facing German culture.

The Irish born Gerard Delanty considers this divide between the old and new nationalism the most peculiar characteristic and at the same time other researchers found the same turn away from primordialism in favor of cultural relativism. Their participation in the political processes and elections indicates that neo-nationalism accepted the basic rules of parliamentarianism.

Since most Western states have isolated successfully the physical confrontation in their societies, wealth redistribution conflict has become both cause and form of manifestation of neo-nationalism. This conflict type emerged simultaneously with the crisis of Keynesianism in the seventies and resulted in the politicization of regional development processes (Keating 1996:46, Paquin 2002: 60). Social cohesion generated by the welfare state in the aftermath of the Second World War has weakened under the new circumstances of privatization, and regional actors took up the initiative in place of a withdrawn state center.

¹⁸ Hungarian politicians pleading against the enlargement of the existing benefits granted to ethnic Hungarians living in the neighboring states often articulate their arguments in terms of small state nationalism and economic chauvinism. Most notably, this was the case at the Dual Citizenship Referendum in 2004.

Under the condition of competition for foreign capital and central resources, market and European institutions are regarded as partners by regional actors, while other regions are seen as rivals. “So minority nationalism is not mere ethnic particularism, as so many observers continue to insist... These are becoming global societies, the reference points for political debate and social integration rather than mere fragments of wider societies” –says Michael Keating (1996: 218), a Scottish researcher, explaining the grounds for affection of the minority nations towards globalization and EU.¹⁹ Neo-nationalist movements have accommodated themselves not only to transnationalism, but also to free market, leaving behind economic autarchy. This explains why they resort to protectionism as a last instance veto tool, and why they pursue cultural politics based on the “smokescreen effect of diverting public attention away from their actual, socio-economic priorities” (Gingrich and Banks 2006: 18)

Globalized environment, especially the large cities hosting masses of guest workers generated increased openness towards immigrants and a revision of the politics of cultural homogenization. This demand for multiculturalism has changed the accent from national purity to assimilation. Besides, they frequently rely upon, and (mis)use certain elements of multicultural theories, mainly those institutions which legitimize the separation of cultures and communities (Gingrich and Banks 2006: 3, 18).

This push towards multiculturalism had been noticed by empirical researchers of neo-nationalism thirty years ago. For example, political scientist Juan Linz (1985) found that instead of the so called primordial factors of identity, the people advocating the independence of Basque Country considered living and working in the territory as mainly a constitutive trait of Basque people.²⁰ Observers of Scottish, Flemish, and Canadian nationalism confirm that welfare services rather than culture make up the core of regional identity. They found the decentralization of social politics has become decisive in the process of mobilization of local communities and their confrontation with central government in a manner in which discourses concerning social politics incorporate at the same time other discourses regarding values, and social, political and economic views of a regional community. Scholars of social theories emphasize the importance of the local identity not only as an element in the process of minority state building, which is often considered divisive or hostile, but also cardinal in achieving a strong sense of solidarity, necessary for upholding the costly social programs of the welfare states.

Taking all these particularities of western nationalism together, observers assign neutrality to the territorialist and civic approach of most of the western nationalist movements over against ethnic nationalism.

Apart from the fact that the utmost adherents of the theory of neo-nationalism are themselves members of one of these stateless nations, a fact however relevant in the sociology of scientific knowledge, one can notice the scientific objectification of the abovementioned discourses of neo-nationalism. In his book, entitled *The Sociology of Nationalism* David McCrone (1998: 128-129), professor of Edinburg University, recapitulated the research oriented on this issue and found the following key features decisive in the movement of stateless nations:

- Neo-nationalism occurs in coherent civil societies which are not independent states, but are enjoying some degree of political autonomy;
- Although the complex relationship between cultural and political-territorial components of nationalism endures, civic nationalism prevails over ethnic nationalism;
- Since the concerned people possess multiple national identities, in appropriate circumstances any of these can be played as a vehicle for political mobilization;
- Movements hardly occur in poor regions, but in relatively rich ones where “relative gratification” is more important than relative deprivation;
- Their progressive political and economic aspects outweigh reactionary ones;
- They can be characterized by an ideological mix: political right and left, corporatism and neo-liberalism, the shifts of their ideological “cocktail” relates to the composition of the affected constituencies;
- The support for the self-government movement is not given or fixed, and heavily varies at certain elections;

¹⁹ In a similar manner another researcher, Stéphane Paquin (2002: 72) stated that „the arguments cited in support of the Union of 1707 are today being cited in favour of Europe”.

²⁰ According to Juan Linz’s (1985: 216) empirical research Basque independendist respondents attributed far greater significance to living and working in the region over primordialist aspects than did centrist, federalist or autonomist respondents. Linz found this revelation of independendists as part of a larger tendency to accommodate the presence of migrants, people with multiple identities in the region with the desideratum of independence.

- As political movements or parties their institutionalization is late, only since the second half of the twentieth century;
- There is a major ambiguity about their final objective and the dilemmas concerning break away vs. larger autonomy, nationalism vs. regionalism;
- Their activity and aims are inseparable from the variable geometry of power confined by transnational institutions, nation states and subnational regions.

Present and future of the Scottish nation-building

According to a classified British governmental report from 1974, the discovery of the huge North Sea oil reserves as well as the accession of the UK in the EC gave the impetus for Scottish nationalism.²¹ In the report the leading economist of the *Scottish Office* noted that the existing oil reserves would “transform Scotland into a country with a substantial and chronic surplus”. However, the *McCrone Report* understood the specificity of Scottish nationalism, which is that they are “much more concerned with economic prosperity than nationalist movements in other countries”.

Considering all these aspects and in order to prevent a possible secession the Labour Government opted for the administrative decentralization of Scotland and Wales. The first referendum on this topic proposed the establishment of an independent Scottish representative body, but the referendum failed due to the low participation under the required threshold. Once the Labour Party came to power in 1997, devolution was replaced on the political agenda and finally received the necessary number of votes. During this time, however, the Scottish National Party (SNP), the partisan of the idea of the region’s independence, gained strength, thus becoming the main opposition party in the newly established regional assembly, and then in 2007 becoming the ruling party, although they could form only minority government.

After a major victory in the 2011 election, the SNP leaders decided to launch a referendum concerning the future of Scotland. In October 2012 the First Minister of Scotland and the British Prime Minister negotiated the *Edinburgh Agreement* specifying the conditions of the referendum and conferring a legal base for it.²² In order to deliver a “decisive expression of the views of people”, the *Agreement* stipulated a single referendum question, the independence, without a “B option” for hesitating people. In this way the *Agreement* precluded the so called “devo max” possibility, offering unlimited budgetary and taxation powers, the option favored by the great majority of the voters.

Meanwhile Scottish intellectuals, among them the hereinafter cited Keating, have elaborated dozens of projects concerning the design of an independent Scotland. The Scottish government published its own vision in a 670 page document in November, 2013.²³ Briefly, they intend to lower the corporation tax rate up to three per cent to increase the country’s competitiveness relative to Britain. They also intend to preserve the pound as a currency and the English Bank as lender of last resort. Their foreign politics would be marked by membership in the Commonwealth, EU, and NATO, besides an orientation towards Nordic countries with a prospective membership in the Nordic Council. For national defense purposes they intend to set up their own army, wherefore they insist on denuclearization of the country.

The common currency, succession in international organizations, and especially EU membership and the nuclear base are among the contentious questions, revealing the contingency of the Scottish White Book. In lack of an express agreement, the preservation of the British currency would imply a serious limitation of a genuine Scottish monetary politics. Common currency as well as the Commonwealth membership or the Queen as head of the new state all forecast that Scottish politicians take for granted the British influence even after the independence. Moreover, due to its unique deep water conditions and favorable location, the importance of Faslane naval base holding British nuclear submarines are comparable to the Baikonur Cosmodrome for Russia or the British Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus. Therefore observers do not rule out that Britain will keep this base at whatever cost.

The puzzle of the viability of Scotland’s economy is another critical point often under fire by unionists, targeting Scottish denizens in their campaign. The Scottish government even commissioned a report from a working group including two Nobel Laureates to dismiss these skeptical arguments concerning the lack of economic perspectives. However, oil reserves and extraction somewhat declined relative to its peak in the eighties, but the author of the McCrone Report still considers that the remaining reserves could provide the

²¹ Declassification of the “suppressed” *McCrone Report* (available [here](#)) has been attained only in 2005, too late, according to those considering the exploitation of the reserves far-gone.

²² The Agreement is available on the UK Government’s [website](#).

²³ [The Scottish Government](#): *Scotland’s Future. Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*, 26 November, 2013.

economic background for an independent Scotland through diligent extraction and careful investment of the resulting profit.²⁴ The abovementioned working group went beyond this position stressing that Scotland's economy would be viable even without its huge oil reserves.²⁵

The perplexity around EU membership is double. Although the unionist campaign, entitled "Better Together," takes Scottish EU membership as weak point, a cause of offence against their case, this position ignores at the same time that the governing Conservative Party has advocated for a long time the renegotiation of UK-EU Accession Treaty and even exit from the EU. If this ever happens, EU membership in the long run is not granted together with British, and for this purpose it seems that » Better Separated «.

On the other side, the Scottish EU membership problem is wrongly set out solely as a legal problem. The British position is elaborated by not less than the well known international legal scholar from Cambridge University, James Crawford, an expert in issues concerning the creation of new states. Professor Crawford stressed that judged solely according to the public international legal norms, any seceding state must apply for membership in an international organization. However, Crawford warns that EU membership is governed by communitarian law and it is likely that without a precedent a creative and expansive interpretation will prevail, because "the relevant EU organs or Member States might be willing to adjust the usual requirements for membership in the circumstances of Scotland's case".²⁶ Some veteran British experts are more optimistic about Scotland's EU accession and rally against the UK government position, as well as some publicists underlining that foreign corporations having business interest in Scotland will support the country's membership to secure legal certainty of their enterprise.²⁷

It is worth noticing the post-national "win-win" position of the Conservative Party after the September voting, since the failure of the referendum would prove they properly managed this critical situation, on the other hand, the success of the referendum would somewhat weaken the position of their rival Labour Party.²⁸ Obviously, there are also higher, geopolitical interests at stake wherefore unionists draw attention: besides the critical question of the naval base, the fear of loss of credibility within the transatlantic partnership, loss of the UN Security Council seat, recurrence of the Irish conflict, and break away of other territories.

At the moment of writing this article most of the opinion polls surveyed at least a 15% lead of the unionists.²⁹ Due to a high proportion of uncommitted voters the British political elites are hardly comforted by this lead.³⁰ It is well known that trend analysis in the field of political opinion in the UK surveyed an increasing number of people standing against the union of Scotland and Britain³¹, as well as the constant strength of Scottish regional identity over against an overarching British identity.³² In light of these trends and the precedent of the Edinburgh Agreement, it is likely that even in the case of the failure of the independence referendum there will be promoted future referendums about the "devo plus" or "devo max" arrangement, a version of full autonomy, and under favorable conditions, full independence.

Conclusion

²⁴ For details see Gavin McCrone's article from [The Scotsman](#).

²⁵ The [Executive Summary](#) of the Report stated that „by international standards Scotland is a wealthy and productive country". They found that even excluding the North Sea oil revenues, the GVA in Scotland can reach up to be 99% of the UK average.

²⁶ [HM Government](#): *Scotland Analysis. Devolution and the Implications of Scottish Independence*. February, 2013, 164. and see also 177. §.

²⁷ According [The Guardian](#) and the [BBC](#) former ECJ judge, Sir David Edward and former chief EU accession negotiator Graham Avery foresee a less problematic Scottish accession than usually depicted by Unionists.

²⁸ In the support of this opinion one can recall the last parliamentary elections, when the Labour Party won 41 mandates to one Conservative mandate in Scotland. It is also true that since 1945 only two times to the six Labour Party governing has the majority been pendant on Scottish votes. Even so, a [recent poll](#) among Tory MP Candidates found that 46% of the candidates would not be „uncomfortable about Scotland becoming independent".

²⁹ A repository of these opinion polls can be found here: <http://ukpollingreport.co.uk/scottish-independence-referendum>

³⁰ [The Sunday Times](#) quoted Lynton Crosby, campaign advisor of Prime Minister David Cameron who had admitted that Scottish victory "is not only possibly, but likely" due to the ineffective race.

³¹ [British Social Attitudes](#) survey for the period between 1997-2011 indicated the rise from 14% to 24% the number of those who consider Scotland should leave UK, while the number of those who wish Scotland to remain part of UK with its own Parliament had fallen 44% from the initial 55%. The survey also mentioned that double proportion of respondents, which is, 44% of English people thinks Scotland gets more than its fair share from the UK budget.

³² According the forced choice method of [What Scotland Thinks](#) survey 66% of Scotland's population is considering herself Scottish, and only 24%. The open survey method for multiple identities found 32% „more Scottish than British", 32% „equally Scottish and British", 25% „Scottish not British".

The contours of an independent Scotland *within a gradually intensifying power sharing scheme* ranging from the existing devolution to a maximum devolution or full independence in the shadow-hegemony of the Remaining United Kingdom and other transnational structures are hard to see.

From a strictly scientific point of view this hardship has its roots in the lack of a synthesis bridging the experience of disintegration of postcolonial and post communist states on one side, and the decentralization, as well the political crises of the western states on the other side. This is why generalization from existing examples of secession (like Norway from Sweden, Syria from Egypt, and Singapore from Malaya, USSR, Czechoslovakia) cannot help in simply choosing between disintegration and negotiated separation, contradictory terms in traditional old geopolitics and comparative political studies.

Today this gap is filled by governance theories which made significant progress merging issues of post hegemonic global order and state crisis. The ambition of these theories in reevaluating the role of social-political fragmentation in explaining power sharing agreements is congruent with the findings of research targeting western neo-nationalism.

Some researchers of British colonialism are also part of this theoretical convergence, stressing that “inner decolonization” in Britain (Howe 2012) must be correlated with the complex form of the indirect rule and lie in the context of what he called “imperial aftershocks” of a permanently “renewing” empire. Neo-nationalism heavily relies on transnational governance, because ultimately this is responsible for the “«secession »of the new cosmopolitan class” (Kaldor 1996: 51) from the national political space and gives the new nationalist movements room for maneuvering.

Forasmuch as “post” theories are macrosocial theories, from their point of view the focus is not the result of the upcoming referendum. No doubt that permissive domestic regulation, the persistence of subversive power sharing institutions and the receptive international ambiance together form a frame in which the cost of secession is lower. This is why their success is primarily a question of time and timing. The focus instead should be on whether the international community is ready to accept the independence of these regions, which, whether transnational governance, global or European, is strong enough for the transnational integration of these regions.

The task of neo-nationalism theory is rather to point at the factors which dispose host states to follow post-national strategies in similar situations. Be that as it may, the Canadian and British political elites accepted as valid the practices of post hegemonic and post national power sharing, including the possibility of secession. Otherwise they could have chosen from the well known strategies aiming at the suppression of nationalism.

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