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Will Nation-state Survive?: A Narrative on its Decline, Essentiality and Alternatives

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ABSTRACT

The debate over whether nation-states are a recent development or a long-standing phenomenon, as well as whether to prioritise the nation or the state when analysing nation-states, has recently taken on a lot of significance. This has sparked discussion on whether the idea itself is a part of the liberal agenda, a project to homogenise the nation at the expense of many cultural practises, or is just a phenomenon that is deeply troubled. There are arguments that attempt to portray the nation-state as vanishing in the midst of globalisation, yet many continue to support its relevance by putting up alternative models.

Keywords: Globalization; McDonalidization; Clash of Civilization; Dialogue among nations

INTRODUCTION

Recent years has seen multiple debates on the issue of nation state:. Whether the concept of the nation-state is fading¹, whether it has become a finished project, whether it has only produced democratic states or authoritarian ones as well? what problems do nation-states in the modern era face, especially in the post-globalization or post-liberalization phase². Other questions include whether nation-states are vanishing. or have they already disappeared? whether nation-states are perishing or coming to an end in the modern day, whether they are becoming outdated, etc.

First, we must analyse the nation-state, either as a single integrated unit or as a discrete entity³. As Anderson⁴⁻⁶ says, a nation is essentially a socio-cultural entity where everybody will have an equal grasp of their political system and culture. In contrast, a state is a political entity. The nation may develop without a state; the state has a set

geography or boundaries. Jews were a nation without a state prior to the creation of Israel, just as the Palestinians are a nation. Hundreds of different nationalities may be represented in one state, but these nations may also form one nation. Even while China and the former Soviet Union both claimed to have a variety of nationalities, in the end, all of them were either Chinese or Russian. In this paradoxical situation, a single nationality's dominance over other, weaker nationalities led to the creation of the nation. For instance, the Hun nationality in China^{7,8} has been dominating other nationalities, and while doing so, it excludes or suppresses other nationalities on the grounds that they are "extreme radicals," "threats," etc. The best example is the Ugihar nationality in the province of Xianjing.

But according to Anderson, nationalism invariably results in the creation of a nation-state. He believes that the nation is an imagined construct, produced by the widespread use



of the printing press rather than any concrete material circumstance in people's lives. Hobswan had an alternative idea. For him, the notion of an imagined society is not a novel one; it is a phenomenon that dates back to the eighteenth century. The factors that brought individuals together to create the envisioned nation were language, culture, and ethnicity. More than that, he thought that national unity was a political idea rather than a socio-anthropological one that is imposed from above. For him, states and nationalism do not create nations; rather, it is the reverse.⁹

Similar to how nationalists encourage the development of nation-states, according to scholars like Gellner. In reality, he holds that a nation's economic progress necessitates the inclusion of all groups in that development, which breeds resentment and eventually creates a homogenous nationalist culture. However, a nearly identical process that resulted in unequal power distribution and anti-colonial nationalism occurred in the colonial world. Industrialization also helped to delegitimize colonial power in this case.

Curiously, Hegel,^{10,11} a German philosopher, claims that the nation-state is best managed by constitutional government and that it is the result of objective thought. On the other hand, a Marxist like Kautsky¹², contends that there were three components involved in the creation of the nation-state when analysing the nationality issue in Austria. The first is the desire for a local market for the creation of goods by the bourgeoisie; the second is political freedom, such as democracy; and the third is the spread of national culture for the populace. However, Marxists concur that the state is the result of irresolvable class conflicts or contradictions, represents bourgeois power and its interests, and appears to be superior to civil society. Lenin and other Marxists contend, however, that the state is founded on the basis of force. People like Stalin¹³ contend that nation or nationality can take many various forms, including agrarian (like the Vietnamese peasantry), industrial (like the workers in Poland), or even commercial. However, Marxists would contend that the development of the nation-state was equally influenced by colonialism and the following exploitation of the colonised nations, colonial and post-colonial capitalism, the market, mercantile capitalism, etc. In the Indian context, Marxists like Irfan Habib¹⁴. A.R.Desai¹⁵ and others interestingly claimed that the circumstances for nation-state were produced by colonial exploitation through many mechanisms, including rural mercantile capitalism, industrial capitalism, and finance capitalism. Noble Laureate Rabindranth Tagore [14 offered the best critique of nationalism in, arguing that it is always risky to embrace extreme nationalism. But whether this goal of creating a nation-state is finished remained in doubt.

LIBERAL PROJECT

In fact, according to modern liberal research, the Westphalian system is where the nation state first emerged. In that

regard, the modern nation-state might be seen as a product of western liberalism. After thirty years of conflict, this was agreed upon in the Westphalia Peace Treaty of 1648. This is predicated on the ground that every state in the world has sovereign authority over both its own internal affairs and its borders. In other words, principles of non-intervention were promoted in the nation's domestic affairs, and they are also free from any outside intrusion. This peace pact, however, treated all the states equally; there is no distinction between the states. Who benefited from the Westphalian accord is still a matter of debate, though. This really benefited the western world because it made large-scale invasion or intervention within the European continent difficult, but not vis-à-vis the rest of the world. The goal of the conquest of the developing nations was to provide "civilization and modernity."

Scholars, on the other hand, contend that the world system prior to the start of the French Revolution was centred around princes, emperors, monarchs, authoritarian leaders, dictators, etc. It is asserted that the French Revolution established a nation-state, which was truly reflected in the manner it shaped French political and cultural identity and guarded against external intervention. The United States and other countries around the world have repeated this procedure. In actuality, these two revolutions gave rise to the notion of nation-states—an autonomous state ruled in the name of the people, providing equality and constitutionalism, a uniform political culture, and a uniform trajectory of political modernity. This served as the model and foundation for the creation of new nation-states in non-Western regions. The theories of modernity, political culture, political articulations, system theory, etc. were advocated on the basis of this, but regrettably these theories were used as a frame-work to analyse the developing or underdeveloped world without understanding the cultural specificities of the nascent emerging countries. Nation-states that didn't fit into these paradigms were labelled "failed states," "rouge states," and other derogatory terms.

There were also other debates. One debate is that once dynastic or authoritarian nations begin to fall apart, the nation-state process becomes universal and automatic process; this is known as the emulation process. This occurred when the Soviet Union fell apart in the decade beginning in 1980; its satellite nations imitated and changed into different nation-states; Yugoslavia and central Asian nations are the greatest examples. It is suggested that more than thirty democratic, yet national in character, countries emerged during the post-Soviet era.

However, during the era of super power competition and the subsequent cold war, the western world's paradigm of nation-state was severely criticized. It became commonplace for US and USSR forces to interfere in many parts of the world. In actuality, US interference in developing nations is nothing new. It is commonly known that after Chile gained its independence in 1811, it has a history of interfering



in Chile. Third-world nations, including Cuba, Panama, Haiti, Korea, Syria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Angola, and others, were the scene of proxy conflicts or direct military operations. Nation-states have frequently fallen apart due to the whims and fancies of the two big powers.

The two world wars, which devastated a significant number of European governments despite the fact that they had developed into nation-states, were another occurrence that occurred at the same time during this time period. This was sparked by the rise of fascism around the world, including in countries like Italy, Germany, Spain, and Japan. In the guise of racial purity or superiority, ethnicity, global hegemony, etc., it destroyed the various governments. The expansion of nationalist movements, whether in Asia, Africa, or Latin American nations, was another significant occurrence that occurred during this time. After the Second World War, a large number of nations attained independence, but this does not imply that the nation-state enterprise was over.

The concerns and problems that these recently developed nations faced included neo-colonialism, poverty, underdevelopment, backwardness, inequality, widening economic and social disparities, etc. The fall of communist regimes in the European Union and its supporters in other areas of the world, however, was what altered the course of nation-states. This does not mean the US or the unipolar world will no longer interfere in the domestic affairs of nation-states. The US's intervention in Libya, Iraq, and other countries is the clearest example of how it entirely destroyed Arab nation-states. Libya, for instance, is proof of a divided nation state since it has two parliaments and two armies and has become a battleground for many ethnic groups after Gaddafi's death. Yemen is another illustration. Even the Arab Spring, which ironically helped to strengthen the nation-state in the Middle East, had started to work against it. It has sparked a state of religious fanaticism, including the Taliban and the Islamic state. For a while, this extremism also gave rise to nation-states that were extremists, such as Afghanistan, and moderate/parliamentary extremism, of which Turkey is the clearest example.

CLASH BETWEEN CIVILIZATIONS AND NATION-STATES

The notion of the Clash of Civilizations,¹⁶ promoted by Samuel P. Huntington in the late 1990s, is what has recently transformed the theory of the nation-state, especially following the fall of the Soviet Union. - Bernad Lewis, a British orientalist, first promoted this notion in a 1957 speech at John Hopkins University. Later, Austrian philosopher Hans K  chler, who thought that the west and Islam had divergent cultural values that could be addressed by conflict, endorsed it.

The central tenet of Huntington's argument is that culture, not nation-states, will ultimately shape global politics. This does not imply that Huntington has given up on the nation-state project. He held that although each civilization is made up of numerous nation-states, they all behave in a civilised way. Huntington examines the nation-waning state's influence in this context. The end of history, the reemergence of old rivalries between nations, the fall of the nation state due to the conflicting pulls of tribalism and globalism, among other things, are just a few of the visions academics have spread about the future of world politics. Herein lies the risk of nation-states becoming less distinct; instead of being varied entities, they become homogenous ones.

Huntington rejects the claim that cultural differences¹⁷ are not the main cause of global conflict but rather ideologies and economic concerns. He contends that while nation states are still the most potent actors in contemporary politics, conflicts will inevitably arise between nations and groups of other civilizations. He held the view that the struggle of the modern era will be between the western world and the Islamic world. Both have a long history of struggle and have different views about problems such as god and man, citizens and the state, rights and obligations, freedom and authority, etc. In addition, he will not identify Confucian thought or Hinduism as potentially leading to a war of civilizations in the near future. However, his recommendations, such as Americanization and checkmating, to lessen the clash of civilizations between the west and the Islamic world. Greater effects of multiculturalism include the emergence of "America first" and other anti-immigrant, anti-Islamic, and anti-Latino ideologies. After 9/11, the US began to follow Huntington's idea, and is today recognised as a nation of "liberal fascism."¹⁸⁻²⁰

In opposition to Huntington, former Iranian President Khatami^{21,22} and the UN promoted "Dialogue Among Civilizations"²³ in an effort to save nation-states from impending collapse. In addition, the UN General Assembly designated 2001 as the year of "Dialogue Among Civilizations"^{24,25}, nevertheless, attempts to organise a "Alliance of Civilizations"^{26,27} were unsuccessful. Unfortunately, President Bush adopted Huntington's thesis as part of US foreign policy, waging war on those "who are not with us" and ultimately destroying nation-states like Afghanistan, Libya, and Iraq for all time. US incidentally was castigated as Rogue nation²⁸ aimed at destroying Rogue nations.²⁹

THE END OF THE NATION-STATE

One crucial point that is frequently raised is whether the concept of the nation-state is dying out in light of the rise of various nationalist movements, ethnic and nationalist violence, sectarian violence, and tribal resurgence. In fact, it is asserted that the decline of nation-state's started much earlier than the twenty-first century. It began to weaken



in the 19th century as a result of colonisation, superpower competition, and other factors. The idea of nation-states continuing²⁴ to be political entities is the subject of a second argument. One cannot dispute the fact that the nation-state has been further pushed to the margins of society by the recent wave of globalization³⁰ which is mediated by global capital, multilateral institutions, and cultural industries. This does not portend the end of the nation state. The idea of a borderless state is increasingly becoming a reality, and in the modern era, globalisation has destroyed national boundaries in order to connect with the global economy without any borders³¹. The idea of national geographies has also collapsed, and the world has become interconnected or networking, with every person in every remote region of the globe connected to the global market. People are quickly connecting thanks to cultural industries; it is now possible to show opposition to a global cause from one's local country. A volatile economy is being produced by global capital, which can now move freely from one area to another in a matter of seconds. In addition, it leads to cultural homogeneity, sometimes known as the "McDonaldization" of the economy, including knowledge system³².

Cultural symbols are another sort of capital that is travelling and that no one country can control. At this point, the nation-state is no longer a strong category but is also no longer necessary. This is due to the fact that nation-states are still necessary for globalisation in order to manage global capital, enable the global market, and support global institutions, they are a very weak system and even their sovereignty is comparatively declining. This is the reason nation-states have failed to fulfil their initial commitment to safeguarding people's lives, property, freedom, and liberties. This failure has resulted in a plethora of issues, including an increase in the number of people living in poverty on a global scale, an increase in the number of super-rich people, a sharp rise in the number of suicides and deaths, whether related to farming or not, an increase in the number of development refugees, and an increase in the number of people being uprooted from their home countries and relocated to other parts of the world. In actuality, nation-states have failed to control the flow of information, ideas, international crimes, money circulations, businesses, and boundaries throughout the current globalisation period. Here the nation-state system breaks down.

This raises the question of whether nation-states are no longer relevant in light of the transnational danger posed by various separatist organisations, ethnic groups, and extreme religious movements coexisting with and concurrent with globalisation. Those who assert that they have global citizenship are now making this point as well. It is true that non-state actors are active throughout the world, attempting to further their goals of establishing theocratic or religiously based states. After 9/11, these initiatives were unsuccessful, yet they still continue to further their goals.

Globalization and its particular politics may have rendered many nation-states very weak, but not extinct.

This claim's corollary is that nation-states have devolved into failed political structures. The best examples of a failed nation-state are Lebanon, Afghanistan and Syria. These political systems have been criticised for failing to provide security, distribute resources wisely, consider social equality, or acknowledge the presence of various ethnicities or ethnic groups. Pakistan is the best illustration of a Near Failed Nation-State, which is another category. Although they are few in number, there is no assurance that they won't increase in the near future.

CRISIS OF NATION-STATE

Whether nation-states are experiencing a serious crisis is one relevant question. In reality, a US-based publication called Foreign Affairs contends that not all nation-states are in dire straits. It identifies India and Russia as the two significant nations in the midst of a serious crisis. It is paradoxical that India was castigated as "failed state" during the time of Covid, as the state failed to distribute the resources judiciously. Nonetheless, the way India overcome the crisis, by responding to the interventions of judiciary and media, demystified the stereotypes about India. Military-dominated nations are not experiencing a crisis. It is strange but true that the US economic crisis is not seen as a national catastrophe. The claim is likely that the US nation-state project was finished much earlier, right after the American Revolution. This understanding actually ignores historical events like civil wars, African American and indigenous population assertions, which unmistakably show that the nation-state project was not finished right away after the revolution but rather after numerous wars, conflicts, and the extermination of indigenous populations.

There are still two unanswered questions: first, does nation-state represent a finished construct, and second, will nation-state retaliate successfully?

It may be true that the nation-state project in the US and many other European countries is almost finished, which is very clear from the way the European Continent is taking shape. Other liberal western nations are not included in this, either. In the Quebec region, Canada is in a serious crisis. In some developing nations, the project has reportedly remained unfinished. The project hasn't been finished, as seen by the growing religious division in India, separatist movements, ethnic violence in Pakistan, tribal strife in Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq, and Libya, among other things. This demonstrates two trends that are occurring in the modern day. One trend is that the nation-state has remained an incomplete construct or has undergone a rupture. Unfortunately, rather having greater supra-national identities, conflict and expanding ascriptive identities have come to dominate the nation-state.



The final query concerns a potential replacement for this crisis-ridden nation-state. Making little city states is one solution that might be found. Monaco, Singapore, and other mature examples are culturally homogenous, well-managed, and independent while nevertheless remaining sovereign states. These city-states have evolved into "centres of growth, development, commerce, finance, technology, and centres of power as well. They are not, however, militarily strong nations, and they are easily eliminated from the political arena. There are still other options. One of them is to strengthen regionalism or regional integration. The nation-state will resurge as a strong system or as a very weak system, depending on the arguments—crisis-ridden nation-state, outmoded nation-state, demise of the nation-state, death of the nation-state, etc. The paradox of the nation-state in the modern era is this.

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