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NATION AND NATIONALISM IN THE MODERN STATE

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Abstract: *In this paper, we will show how nationalisms and nations work and exist. Through the analysis, we will determine the variations within these concepts on a theoretical and practical level. The emergence of modern nation-states managed to eliminate the negative connotation of the term nationalism. Nevertheless, on the territory of the former Yugoslavia, nationalism was manifested in the most extreme and politicized form, which caused national conflicts. Bearing this in mind, in the paper we will show the Janus face of nationalism, with a clear distinction between the old nation states that arose in Western and Central Europe and the new nation states that arose on the soil of the former socialist republics.*

Keywords: *nation, nationalism, national state, theories about the nation, ethnic groups.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nation and nationalism are modern phenomena. The role and importance of nationalism as well as the idea of nation in the 20th, and especially in the 21st century was difficult to assess. Nationalism went through different developmental stages, where it was first challenged, then praised, and again criticized, condemned and rejected as a negative ideological paradigm. However, at the beginning of the 21st century, it became clear that nationalism was getting stronger. Processes such as globalization, modernization, instead of diminishing the importance of nationalism, have contributed to its strengthening. After the collapse of communism, in the former republics of the Soviet Union, especially in Eastern and Southeastern Europe, nationalism manifested itself in its most extreme form at the beginning of the 90s of the 20th century, which caused the process of desovereignization of nation states.

In theory, there were conflicting opinions about this phenomenon. The second disagreement refers to the historical period when nationalism, the nation and the national

state emerged (Giddens, 2007). Two centuries ago, nation states were rare. Marxism minimized the reality of the nation and the state (which is defined as a means of coercion in the hands of the ruling power (Max Weber), focusing only on what divides it, that was- class conflicts (Moren, 2002). Until the second half of the 19th century, nationalism was entirely a political and socio-cultural phenomenon of the Western European (Weller, 2005). Weller defined nationalism as “unique to the West”, explaining that when nationalism and the nation (as its creation) proved successful in the West, they became “an attractive export product “. However, the countries that adopted nationalism had a different social, political and cultural context (Weller, 2005). This influenced nationalism to manifest itself in different forms. In Central and Eastern Europe, a strong wave of nationalism combined with chauvinism. which brought to the surface the problems related to ethno-nationalism, the nation-building process at the substate level, up to the issue of secession and ethnic conflicts.

1.1. THEORIES ABOUT NATIONALISM AND THE NATION

Before the modern rise of nationalism, Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim believed that nationalism has negative tendencies and that with the development of economy and industry, it will disappear. This hypothesis was advocated by S.M. Lipset and S. Rokan, but it turned out to be unsustainable, because nationalism experienced a rise thanks to modernization and the rise of the economy, which is especially visible in the case of narrow forms of nationalism such as minority nationalism, which will be discussed in the rest of the paper.

Hans Ulrich Weller explained why nationalism was born in the West. Only in the West until the 20th century did a revolution take place due to the crisis of modernization. Only in the West were there assumptions, general context, ideas, social formations and struggles for legitimization that created the basis for the emergence of nationalism (Weller, 2005).

Ernest Gellner represents the main theorist of nationalism who takes a constructivist approach to the nation, which is the opposite of the organicist understanding of the nation (K.Gerc, V.Konor, D.Horovitz...). Gellner gave a definition of nationalism that was accepted by many authors, which reads: “Nationalism is primarily a political principle that implies that political and national unity should be congruent” (Gelner, 1983). Nationalism as a political principle is followed by the understanding of nationalism as a sentiment or movement. Gellner believes that the nationalist principle can be easily and quickly violated, e.g. if the political borders of a given state do not include all members of the respective nation, or include some members who do not belong to that nation. Also, there is another particularly significant type of violation of the nationalist principle - when the rulers of a certain political community belong to a nation other than the one to which the majority of subjects belong (Gelner, 1983).

2. DETERMINATION OF THE NATION

According to Gellner, nationalism, the nation and the national state are products of modern civilization, more precisely they originate from the industrial revolution at the end of the 18th century, and did not exist in traditional societies. The denial of the existence of these phenomena in traditional societies caused numerous criticisms of Gellner's theory. According to Gellner, the emergence of nationalism, the nation and the nation-state was influenced by the emergence of modern societies. First, industrialization required a better system of state administration. Second, in modernist states, individuals have to communicate with foreigners, which required "mass education" organized on the basis of a "common language" taught at school (Giddens, 2007). However, Giddens criticizes Gellner's views, because he does not provide an explanation of the passions that nationalism evokes. According to Giddens, the power of nationalism is reflected in its ability to create identity in people (Giddens, 2007).

From the point of view of ethnosymbolism, Anthony Smith analyzes the concept of nation from the existence of pre-modern communities. According to Smith, many nations have pre-modern origins and arose from ethnos (like the Jews who had their own ethnos 2000 years ago, but during a long historical period acquired the characteristics of a nation that served as the basis for the establishment of national Israel, after the Second World War (Giddens, 2007). For ethnosymbolists, myths, memories, traditions, values, history, rituals and symbols are of great importance in the construction of a nation. According to Smith, a nation is a historical community, more or less institutionally rounded, that lives in one territory, which it designates as one's homeland and identifies with it, shares a common language and culture, primarily mass and public culture, but also common symbols, historical myths and memories, whose members have equal legal rights and duties within the common legal system and have a sense of belonging to the nation (Smith, 1998).

The nation represents backbone of the modern age and was created with the development of civil society. The essence of a nation consists of objective (language, religion, origin) and subjective determinants (myths, needs, feelings). The most common criterion necessary for the existence of a nation is the existence of a state. Before the criteria for the existence of the state, culture and politics are important (Milosević Djordjevic, 2008). In modern definitions of the nation, objective determinants of the nation such as language, religion, etc. are very often used. The problem arises when individual elements of culture are taken to define a nation, such as a language that is different from a dialect, which was the case in the Balkans, where state-independent nations form completely different ones from related languages (Milosević Djordjevic, 2008).

In the 1990s, linguistic nationalisms developed in the former SFRY, which preceded the state independence of the federal units. These were countries demanding secession from Serbia and exit from Yugoslavia. The process of secession and the creation of new states was accompanied by the creation of new, national languages. In the territory of the former Yugoslavia, the "breakup of the common language" took place with the affirmation

of special national standard languages. The “process of linguistic engineering” in the case of the Croatian, Bosnian and to some extent Montenegrin languages was reflected in the fact that each of the mentioned languages, through a series of linguistic planning measures, was “directed so that it would be visibly different from the others, especially from Serbian” (Bugarski, 2010). Sociologists in Serbia study the objective characteristics of the nation. Aleksandar Molnar defines the nation by respecting the historical-political aspect, on the basis of which he classifies nations. Old regime nations can be noble, class and monarchical nations. They have grown into modern nations that can be liberal and authoritarian (Milosevic Djordjevic, 2008).

Eik Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in the book *The Inventing of Tradition* state that nations are the product of social engineering and that elites play a decisive role in their creation. Nations are not immutable social facts, but they are product of social engineering. Political leaders resort to inventing tradition. There are two forms of inventing traditions: the adaptation of old traditions and institutions to new circumstances, and the deliberate inventing of completely new traditions that correspond to new needs (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 2001). These authors warn: “Traditions that appear or are claimed to be old are often quite recent in origin, and sometimes invented” (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 2001). True traditions have the ability to adapt, unlike “invented” traditions that are characterized by esotericism and a shared feeling of elite superiority ((Hobsbawm and Ranger, 2001).

According to Valeri Filip Gagnon, the interest of the collective can be defined in several ways. First: under the pressure of competing elites and ethnomobilization, the political elites of a certain group will try to define a relevant national identity, which on the one hand will be based on the values of culture, ethnicity and religion, while on the other hand the political elites will try to appreciate the political context in which frames define identity. Competing policies take place along politicized ethnic-national cleavages and create the impression of continuity between past and present conflicts. Second: political elites will focus on defining the collective interest by selectively relying on tradition and the myth of common origin. Third: elites who manage to identify with the interest of the collective will win and achieve a dominant position in the political debate. Fourth: in the competition to define the collective interest, political leaders try to focus the focus of political attention on the external threat to the group. This political strategy (from threat to conflict) is characterized by aggressive nationalism, where ethnic or national affiliation is the only thing relevant (Gagon, 1995). Almost all nationalist ideologies and political leaders use the myth of tradition and common origin in order to construct their own version of collective identity (which will coincide with the collective and their interests (Milosavljevic Stevic, 2022).

3. NATIONAL STATE

According to Edgar Moren, the formula of the nation state appears in the French Revolution, since then the nation legitimizes the state. Until then, France as a monarchical

state managed the development of nations through the process of assimilation, more precisely through the Frenchization of ethnic groups within its borders. That was also the case with America. These states were emancipatory models. Then, in the 18th century, it slowly spread to Germany and Italy. In the 20th century, the collapse of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires allowed access to nation states for those ethnic groups that did not have them. In the case of Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania, the idea of a nation preceded the creation of a national state (Moren, 2002). Then after World War II, Asian and African peoples fought for liberation from European imperial colonizers and the creation of nation states.

Ernest Gellner raises a number of important questions, among which is the “national entity”, which he says is a synonym for an ethnic group or an ethnic group that has nationalist tendencies. Gellner refers to the connection between ethnicity and the state, defining nationalism as “a theory of political legitimacy according to which ethnic boundaries must not conflict with political ones.” It follows that nationalism is first of all an ethnic ideology according to which a certain group should dominate the state, more precisely that one ethnic group should have supremacy, as well as that the basic features of its identity should be integrated into the official legislation (Eriksen, 1993). According to Thomas Hilan Eriksen, in such states there are expressed tendencies for all citizens to integrate and assimilate (Eriksen, 1993). Nevertheless, Gellner believes that nationalism does not impose homogeneity (as Eli Keduri thought), but that homogeneity is imposed by an objective, inevitable imperative, which eventually appears in the form of nationalism. Here Gellner cites the example of the transition from an agrarian system to industrialization, due to which political or cultural boundaries were changed, in order to satisfy a new nationalist imperative. Based on this, Gellner states that the consequences of nationalism should not be confused with the consequences of industrialism (Gellner, 1983). On accusations against nationalism that it insists on imposing homogeneity on the population, Gellner uses the example of the Ottoman Empire, which he disputes. In the Ottoman Empire, the Turks kept the peace, imposed taxes, but tolerated diversity and were indifferent to different cultures and religions. However, their successors (more precisely, states within the Empire) “could not calm down, until they imposed the nationalistic principle of *cuius region, eius lingua*” (Gellner, 1983). Nevertheless, Simeunović makes a significant claim for understanding the functionality of empires. The larger and more complex a country is, the less likely it is to be a nation state. Empires could never become nation-states because of their multicultural character. Complete assimilation in the empires was not possible due to the territorial scope. Simeunović states: “Empires were just confirming themselves as empires, by encompassing more peoples and cultures.”

According to Gellner, the principle of nationalism can be operative, however, the author warns that one should be careful with individual nationalisms that “must fail, or, more commonly, refrain from even trying to find political expression.” Gellner believes that most cultures do not benefit from nationalism, but are slowly disappearing (for example, the Southern Russians who are culturally different from the Northern Russians,

but still did not take advantage of it like the Ukrainians; then the linguistic differentiation of the Highlands in Scotland is incomparably greater than the cultural distinctiveness of Scotland in the United Kingdom).

Before Ernest Gellner, G. Hegel, Dj. Mancini, John Stuart Mill argued that “the boundaries of government, generally speaking, should coincide with the boundaries of nationality”. In theory, the pressure of the largest and most politically powerful ethnic groups, which often implemented assimilation policies, as in monarchies, is justified. However, in some countries, the nation and national state were created through voluntary assimilation. In the name of the state, the distinctiveness of smaller ethnicities has been sacrificed in various ways in favor of the nation-state as a more general concept. According to Hegel, “particularity is removed in what is general” (Simenunović, 2009).

Gellner’s definition of nation is compatible with Anderson’s “imagined” nation. Benedikt Anderson under the epithet “imagined” does not mean an imaginary community, but that in the minds of members of the nation there is an idea of community”, focusing on sentiments and the strength of national identity (Eriksen, 1993). The compatibility of Anderson’s and Gellner’s points of view is reflected in the understanding of the nation as an “ideological construct that should establish a fictitious connection between a cultural group and the state” and that those “abstract communities are essentially different from earlier communities based on kinship relationships” (Eriksen, 1993).

3.1. Challenges of The New National States

The modern national state is characterized by the completed process of territorialization of power, functional specification of power (separation of civil society and political state), centralized state organization and rational form of political legitimation (Podunavac, 2007). Unlike the pre-modern forms of the territorial state, the national state is characterized by a centralized organization of government. In summary, this means that it has the supreme power and that every other body within the territory is subordinate to it, while the central government itself is not subordinated to any body within the territory (Podunavac, 2007). The basic features of the modern national state are territoriality, functional specification, centralization and direct access of citizens to participate in the distribution of political goods (rights). Centralization is another name for the completed process of territorialization of politics and implies a state that has exclusive power on its territory and is the only one able to maintain order and peace on the internal level and defend its borders (Podunavac, 2007).

In the 19th century, in the Balkans, the policy of assimilation was connected with the centralization of the state and modernization. Assimilation policy arose as a result of migration to urban areas, where people from the “lower” strata assimilated into the “higher”. After the Balkan wars and the First World War, the intensification of the nation-building policy occurred in the southeastern part of Europe. The policy of nation building meant that 46% of peripheral groups were integrated, about 40% of peripheral

groups were assimilated and 14% were excluded. Of these, 81% spoke another language, 54% were of another religion, 44% from urban areas, 39% had a country next door, and 31% had revisionist demands (Harris, 2007).

Simeunovic distinguishes between two types of modern states: 1. old states created in Western and Central Europe; 2. Newly formed, nascent national states that are closely related to the collapse of systemic socialism, created on the soil of the former Yugoslavia. An important role in the disintegration of Yugoslavia was played by the elites who established national states as “personal empires”. The disunity of socialist federations on two or more levels enabled the development of nationalism, against which, paradoxically, the communist elites fought. The “utility value of the nationalist ideology” for the communist elites was reflected in the “easy and quick replacement of the incendiary collectivist, communist ideology with a nationalist one (Simeunović, 2009). Just as some states became national states from the framework of the mentioned empires, so in the former Yugoslavia some peoples managed to achieve political, national, cultural and linguistic affirmation (Croats, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Albanians, Croats). In the newly created national states, the problem of national minorities arises.

Throughout history, minorities have responded to the majority nation-building process in the form of “reactive nationalism”, minority separatism, i.e. “whenever the majority tries to define the state as a single nation, national minorities respond by asking to be recognized as “different societies” or “constituent nations”. (Kymlika, 2002). The politics of nation building implies a “parallel process” in which ruling political elites maintain and strengthen differences with peoples/nations in surrounding states, while at the same time eliminating differences within the borders of their states. The ultimate goal of political elites is to control the group they manage, that is, to eliminate the conditions for the creation of separatism, so that the sovereignty of the state would not be called into question (M. Harris). The politics of nation-building at the sub-state level (led by “aggressive” minorities demanding some form of territorial autonomy) limits the possibilities of the nation-state.

CONCLUSION

From the above, we see that nationalism and the national state, as Western principles, did not have the same effects in post-socialist states. In post-communist states, minority groups responded to the majority nation-building process with sub-state nation-building. The nature of ethnic groups is different in post-communist states, because they build their nationality on objective criteria, primarily on myths about the population of a certain geographical area, for a long period of time. Also, certain elements of national identity were politicized by political elites, due to which nationalism was manifested in a negative light and in the most extreme variant. These are processes that the old nation-states of the West bypassed, thanks to the assimilation processes of minority groups that were present during the period of the creation of nation-states, as well as after that. Post-communist states failed to create a sense of solidarity with the help of various forms of universal national identity, which should have served as a form of “voluntary assimilation”.

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