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The Nation – The Social (Re)Formation of the Human Being

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Abstract

The nation represents a cultural and political division of human communities into distinct identity-based and territorially structured forms. It constitutes an ideologization of human beings and their reality through instruments of state coercion, or alternatively, an almost religious sentiment experienced by human beings who strive for consistency of meaning and order within their spatial and existential relations. This is a process that positions the world within the social dichotomy of “us” versus “them,” involving the diversification of humanity and its habitats along various lines. Historical separations of big nations began in the period between the collapse of the Western Roman Empire and the passing of Charlemagne from the historical and political stage. From that point onward, the idea of the nation gradually emerged over the course of several centuries and within the framework of Anglo-Francophone thought, drawing upon ancient and medieval philosophical reflections on social communities and political organization.

From an academic perspective, the nation enters the historical stage when the bourgeois class emancipates the masses from their centuries-long subjugation to monarchical authority. Following the period of the “divine right of kings,” during which people existed as passive objects under monarchical rule, by the late eighteenth century the territorial population had transformed into a political subject. The promotion of the idea of political equality among individuals, the social contract (Rousseau), and the right to revolt against authority (Locke) constituted the foundation for the emergence of the nation concept. By abstracting religious, linguistic, and cultural varieties within a society—through mechanisms of assimilation and the construction of social reality—the political nation was either formed or, alternatively, “awakened.” Today, two dominant models of the nation are widely recognized. The first, emerging from the political West, is known as the

civic model, in which culturally and ethnically diverse social units become legally, politically, and territorially unified within a single nation-state. In contrast, the ethnic model of the nation rarely succeeds in integrating cultural varieties within a coherent legal order, resulting in societies that often function as pluralistic (segregated) entities or within fragile state structures. The originator of this concept, Furnivall, conceptualizes such societies more as business partnerships than familial communities. These nations are not “created” but are perceived as being “discovered,” awakening from a historical slumber. This paper aims to discuss the scholarly conception of the origin and social function of the nation. Emerging as a social force capable of naturalizing ethnic differences within a territorially undefined or formally unborn state—or as a force that uproots native citizens from their historical habitats and transforms them into adversaries of their former selves—the nation manifests as an extraordinary driving social energy, directed toward the reconfiguration of both individual human reality and broader societal existence.

Keywords: nation, ethnicity, state, social contract, sociology

Nacija – Društveno preoblikovanje čovjeka

Nacija predstavlja kulturnu i političku podjelu ljudskih zajednica na različite oblike zasnovane na identitetu i teritorijalno strukturirane. Ona predstavlja ideologizaciju ljudskih bića i njihove stvarnosti putem instrumenata državne prisile, ili alternativno, gotovo religijski osjećaj koji doživljavaju ljudska bića koja teže konzistentnosti značenja i poretka unutar svojih prostornih i egzistencijalnih odnosa. Ovo je proces koji pozicionira svijet unutar društvene dihotomije “mi” naspram “njih”, uključujući diverzifikaciju čovječanstva i njegovih staništa duž različitih linija. Historijska razdvajanja velikih naroda započela su u periodu između sloma Zapadnog Rimskog Carstva i odlaska Karla Velikog sa historijske i političke pozornice. Od tog trenutka nadalje, tokom nekoliko stoljeća, u okviru anglo-frankofonske misli, ideja nacije se postepeno pojavljivala, crpeći inspiraciju iz antičkih i srednjovjekovnih filozofskih razmišljanja o društvenim zajednicama i političkoj organizaciji. Iz akademske perspektive, nacija ulazi u historijsku fazu kada buržoaska klasa oslobađa mase od njihove višestoljetne podložnosti monarhijskoj vlasti. Nakon perioda “božanskog prava kraljeva”, tokom kojeg su ljudi postojali kao pasivni objekti pod monarhijskom vlašću, do kraja osamnaestog stoljeća teritorijalno stanovništvo se transformiralo u politički subjekt. Promocija ideje političke jednakosti među pojedincima, društvenog ugovora (Rousseau) i prava na pobunu protiv vlasti (Locke) predstavljali su osnovu za pojavu koncepta nacije. Apstrahiranjem

vjerskih, jezičkih i kulturnih raznolikosti unutar društva – kroz mehanizme asimilacije i konstrukcije društvene stvarnosti – politička nacija je ili formirana ili, alternativno, “probuđena”. Danas su široko prepoznata dva dominantna modela nacije. Prvi, koji potiče iz političkog Zapada, poznat je kao građanski model, u kojem kulturno i etnički raznolike društvene jedinice postaju pravno, politički i teritorijalno ujedinjene unutar jedne nacionalne države. Nasuprot tome, etnički model nacije rijetko uspijeva integrirati kulturne raznolikosti unutar koherentnog pravnog poretka, što rezultira društvima koja često funkcioniraju kao pluralistički (segregirani) entiteti ili unutar krhkih državnih struktura. Tvorac ovog koncepta, Furnivall, takva društva konceptualizira više kao poslovna partnerstva nego kao porodične zajednice. Ove nacije nisu “stvorene”, već se doživljavaju kao “otkrivene”, bude se iz historijskog sna. Ovaj rad ima za cilj da razmotri naučnu koncepciju porijekla i društvene funkcije nacije. Pojavljujući se kao društvena snaga sposobna da naturalizira etničke razlike unutar teritorijalno nedefinirane ili formalno nerođene države - ili kao sila koja iskorjenjuje domaće građane iz njihovih historijskih staništa i transformira ih u protivnike svojih bivših ja - nacija se manifestuje kao izvanredna pokretačka društvena energija, usmjerena ka rekonfiguraciji i individualne ljudske stvarnosti i šireg društvenog postojanja.

Ključne riječi: nacija, etnička pripadnost, država, društveni ugovor, sociologija

1.0 On the Concept of Nation

A nation is an idea of itself. It is “us” in self-understanding, or “them” in the external perception of others. Whether emerging on a civic-territorial basis or within historical beliefs in ethnic primordiality, a nation always represents a distinct social, political, and territorial world. These are social alloys that arise, develop, and dissolve. They evolve from ancient cultures, with their divisions being based on social distinctions or opposing political interests, yet historically, they may also emerge *ex nihilo*—on the basis of a political agreement devoid of ethno-cultural depth (Banac, 1998). A nation may be liberation-oriented or hegemonically inclined, territorially unifying or expansively absorbing minority peoples, residing within its civic boundaries or continually revising history in search of its “original” territory and identity. Socially, a nation is a living legacy that eludes complete scientific encapsulation.

Consequently, the definition of a nation belongs to the realm of unfinished scholarship. Without the need for historical linguistic archaeology, linguists simply define the concept of nation as “to love one’s people, to fight for their rights and independence, is to serve not only one’s own nation but all peoples and general progress” (Klaić, 1990, 922). Following the legacies of the American and French revolutions, modern political theory views the nation as people connected through a common national state (Hosbawm, 1993), although even the Western conception of nation does not deny the cohesion of civic and ethnic elements within the national alloy. In its most expansive theoretical scope, a nation is enumerated as “a named human population with a shared historical territory, common myths and historical memories, a shared mass public culture, shared economy, and common legal rights and duties of all members” (Smit, 1998, 30). Others would describe it succinctly as an idea (Dirkem, 1982). It is evident that, in both scientific and lived social terms, the nation represents a multi-layered concept that cannot be reduced to generalized political or sociological theories

(Lakoff, 2000). Attempts to encompass it scientifically have resulted in an excessive number of classifications (Brubaker, 2004) and mutually opposing theories that are neither intelligible nor applicable to the living national organism. Put differently, a nation is an empirical reality indifferent to how it is defined (Zgodić, 1997). Once it exists, it defines itself. It is, in fact, an *imagined community* (Gellner, 1998) whose self-perception strives to materialize culturally, politically, and territorially.

In the modern era, the idea of the nation was shaped during the Enlightenment as a substitute for religion—a pseudo-divinity of human thought and existence. There is no doubt that rationalist Enlightenment ideals permeated human societies, combining their force with accompanying industrialization, which “over time undermined, one after another, elements of religious interpretation of the world” (Manhajm, 1968, 30). This marked the formation of a new kind of epicenter for human life, wherein the individual, instead of systematically contested religion, found a renewed sense of continuity of existence (Anderson, 1998). The entire concept was termed secularism, presented as conciliatory and unifying for religiously, ethnically, and culturally heterogeneous societies. The very term *secular* represented an English mode of masking atheism (Asad, 2008).

The masses were presented with a rationally consistent system into which they could integrate, for they had never “suffered” from an excessive need for truth or facts (Arent, 1998), but rather from a lack of order that kept them balanced within the social axis. Put differently, the vast majority of people owe their identity to the obedient adherence to a bureaucratic system through which the internalization of content necessary for producing a socially desirable type of human being was effectuated. Within this new value system, “national identity has the same status for the nationalist as religiosity does for the religious” (Sekulić, 2003, 143). To become persuasive, nationalism thus adopted numerous postulates of religion, such as the notion of the “chosen people,” the

“promised land,” the “historical enemy,” and the national “historical mission” (Urhahne – Veler, 2002). In this way, the people were guided to believe in their near-primordial nature, oriented toward historical eternity. It was a concept whereby the nation-state, as the ultimate locus of national existence, became an almost deified social element to which the masses swore allegiance, sang praises, and ultimately dedicated their lives, becoming religiously devoted to it. Instead of paradise, the state became the ultimate existential goal of human life and its earthly collective—the nation.

2.0 The Dialectic of the National Idea

The zenith of national existence is represented by the nation-state, which historically emerges at the end of the eighteenth century. Such a state is preceded by pre-state peoples and the intellectual development regarding its constitution, as well as by the disintegration of large monarchies under which newly reconstituted, liberated, or awakened nations emerged. Within the historical trajectory of the development of the idea of the nation and the unified political people, Aristotle’s thesis that “the state does not arise from likenesses” (Aristotle, 1988, 30), or that the most stable social community is “one in which authority belongs to the majority of its members” (Sokolović, 1986, 27), can be regarded as a philosophical spark for the later development of the national idea. Advocating the rule of law rather than the authority of a particular individual or a privileged social group, Aristotle’s concept of civic political people appears at the inception of this historical trajectory, to which later thinkers—Cicero, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Althusius, Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and others—contributed in diverse ways. There is no doubt that classical philosophical-political thought transcended into modern understandings of society through the notion of citizenship and the rule of law (Vinsent, 2009), for the nation, as an European alloy, derives primarily from Greco-Roman, and later Anglo-Francophone,

philosophical and political thought. Within this worldview, the focus is on the development of the so-called Western model of nation formation - the principle of civic consolidation of social differences under the territorial and bureaucratic aegis of the state.

Some scholars contend that the construction of the Western political nation and its social unifying endeavor disrupted preexisting traditional bonds among people, connecting individuals who had no shared ethnic or religious affiliations (Gellner, 1998). More precisely, it was an assimilatory project that created a political bond among culturally diverse groups, which were (voluntarily) integrated into civic unity in exchange for the benefits of peace, security, and prosperity within a common territory. At this level, Hobbes's *Leviathan* also operated, aiming to suppress social conflict by having all individuals, for the sake of their own and their property's security, cede their political and human rights to the state, which would arbitrate all matters. Through this process, over several generations and via a bureaucratized state, a sense of communal unity would emerge, organized on principles closely resembling those of ethno-nations at the inception of their existence. It cannot be asserted with certainty that a purely civic nationalism entirely devoid of ethnic elements exists anywhere, not even among the ideological founders of the civic (Western) model of nationalism in America and France (Brubaker, 1998). Undoubtedly, a superordinate national identity exists in such a state, within which subordinate identities are also included. Within this discourse, the state functions to unite the civic nation through a social contract, generating mutual fraternity grounded in loyalty to its creation—the nation-state. Here, nationalism manifests as a political form and act. The political people are constituted through a schematized process emphasizing democratic procedure, the rule of the majority, the law, and the like. In other words, these procedures confer “substance” to the nation in a manner analogous to democratic voting—much like a group of scientists collectively determines the margins of “truth”—where form dominates, and substance is seldom scrutinized (Lyotard, 2005).

In contrast to this type of nation, its other manifestation—the so-called cultural or ethnic (sometimes termed Eastern) model—grounds itself in ethnic, linguistic, and broader cultural varieties as prerequisites for creating social and political-territorial bonds and for distinguishing itself from others. Within this worldview, the key unifying elements of an ethnic group are shared history, belief in common ancestry, the existence of a mother-state to which the group should return, a common language, a shared past, and so forth. This constitutes a national identity, or “the sum of all markers that make a people a nation” (Klaić, 1990, 397). Belonging to this type of nation is not acquired through a political act—as is often assumed or constructed—but is something one inherently possesses or lacks by virtue of origin, genetic code, and the like (Hagen, 2002). It has been noted that ethnic nationalism is narrowly interpreted “as the inclusion of an emphasis on ancestry and, ultimately, biology” (Brubaker, 2004, 136). Burgess enumerated criteria he considered to encompass the existence of a single ethno-nation (Putinja & Stref-Fenar, 1997). Yet, it cannot be denied that numerous peoples speak the same language, share the same religion, and even possess a substantial portion of shared cultural heritage, yet ultimately constitute distinct ethno-nations. This is evident in examples such as Russia and Ukraine, Serbia and Montenegro, as well as numerous cases within the Anglo-Francophone sphere. Such realities call into question the so-called “objective” theories of the nation (Gellner, 1998), insofar as in practice the prevailing attitude remains that the nation belongs to those who wield power. In this context, Weber concluded that it is not the actual belief in primordiality that matters for ethno-nations, but rather its function, through which these groups assume a shared social form (Malešević, 2009). Here we encounter a rationalist understanding of the nation—it is, in essence, a (contractual) interest. In existential terms, ethno-nations often strive for proto-nationalist or secessionist action, effectively dividing within societies in pursuit of space for separate territorialization and institutionalization. Their aspirations can be mitigated

by civic nationality, yet such efforts often end in one of two extremes: success or intensified resistance. The latter cases are more frequent, contributing to the behavior of ethno-nations within (con)federations as quasi-business partners, since “in matters outside the union, each lives its life as a separate province” (Furnivall, 1948, 307).

The intellectual conceptualization of this type of nationalism began with Johann Heinrich Zedler (1740), who wrote of the nation as a social group sharing customs, morals, and laws—but not territory (Hosbawm, 1993). Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Johann Gottfried Herder argued that language forms the basis of the nation, serving as an expression of a people’s distinct way of life. The linguistic formation of the nation later expanded to a broader sociological universe in which no society can arise without the use of language, which structures social facts. Fichte’s and Herder’s theories addressed “intellectual, artistic, and religious givens, and also aimed to establish a clear boundary between these givens on the one hand, and political, economic, and social givens on the other” (Elias, 2001, 56). On these foundations, the subsequent typologization of nations into Western and Eastern (ethno-national) models was later summarized by Hans Kohn (Smit, 1998).

In summary, it can be said that the Western nation politically unified social heterogeneities within a given state, whereas, on the other hand, the so-called Eastern form of the nation (originating in the West!) remained oriented toward cultural differentiation and/or the attachment of an ethnic group to another “homeland state,” continuously seeking its “ancestral borders” and conceiving of itself in a primordial sense. One of the principal instruments of this concept of the nation is that its living essence is embodied in its language, which also delineates the boundaries of the ethno-nation (Banac, 1988). From this understanding of the nation, for example, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić promoted Serbian nationality by writing of others as Serbs who were unaware of it. If we consider Giddens’ theory of structure, we find that social structure corresponds to the language through which it is realized (Giddens, 1984).

Searle (2010) held a similar view. Precisely within this social discourse and at the time when the idea of the nation was emerging on European soil, specific social roles were assigned to historians, linguists, and artists, who worked to create vivid images of the distant past, often constructing rather than discovering reality. These nations do not emerge, as occurs in the Western-political worldview of nation formation based on a social contract, but rather they “discover themselves,” a process frequently attributed to nationalist intellectuals who are later titled “fathers of the nation” (Urlih–Veler, 2002). Interestingly, the features that nations formed according to the Eastern political model possess at the outset of their existence—such as belief in common ancestry and shared language—are achieved by nations formed according to the Western model only through state coercion and the bureaucratization of human reality at the culmination of their development.

In this regard, it becomes evident that the model-based division of nation formation into Western and Eastern types constitutes an unstable foundation for dogmatic interpretations of national existence, as the historical context—often conditioned by wars, (post)colonialism, and the influence of geopolitics on national unifications and separations in areas of interest—must be taken into account. The early beginnings of European differentiation of peoples based on territory commenced between the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the death of the Carolingian emperors Charlemagne and Charles the Fat. Engels maintained that, in this historical period, “the people are no longer a natural whole but a product of historical development, the intermixing of tribes and ethnic communities” (Lerotić, 1983, 17). This marks the beginning of their (self-)conscious differentiation. With the division of the Carolingian Empire, Europe acquired its territorialized nationalities (kingdoms, principalities), while attempts to restore Western religious-political unity failed, culminating in the early 19th century (Renan, 1907). The concept of nationalizing formerly religiously compact peoples triumphed over the effort to maintain diverse nations under an imperial and religious canopy of unity.

From this, it follows that the differentiation of nations, among other things, represents a process of realizing separate interests. From that moment onward, the process of self-understanding of one's national distinctiveness—regardless of linguistic or religious similarities with others—became predominantly socio-political, requiring several centuries to culminate across Europe and much of the world. From one century to the next, the idea of the political nation and the path toward its positioning as the foundation of the state and a unified social body grew cumulatively. Considering that “every human being is part of the state” (Aquinas, 1990, 150), Aristotle's idea of man as *zoon politikon* was revitalized within 13th-century Italian philosophical thought, although still dominated by the monarchical concept of authority. In other words, the education of distinct peoples in territorial and cultural terms did not yet imply their political constitution through the form of a social contract. At this stage, the people remained a passive object of ideological shaping and governance by others—they were assigned status and form and socially and politically molded according to the needs of the time.

Following Aquinas, Machiavelli advocated for the authority of the people (Machiavelli, 2003). In describing the state, Machiavelli held that it required equality among individuals, as well as laws and the impersonality of power, which in modern political understanding imply that the nation and a constitutional state have been achieved through general consent. Yet in his time, this was not the case, which did not prevent him from championing a state in which inhabitants are equal, advocating for a political order he termed “civil governance” (Pavlović, 2011, 141). Shortly after Machiavelli's death, Europe was engulfed by the Thirty Years' War, which, although triggered by religious causes, shifted the paradigm from religion toward a clearer definition of nationalism. Discussing sovereignty of that era, Johannes Althusius argued that it “is not intended for individual members, but for all members together and for the entire united body of the realm” (Althusius, 2003, 61). He thus emphasized the need to constitute a political people—a nation—as

the source of the state and authority. Opposing the religious justification for monarchical “right to rule,” Althusius advocated that “subjects, in common life, live and govern one another with the aid of just laws” (Ibid, 53). This represented a continuation in the development of the conceptual framework of the nation according to the Western civic model. Althusius pleaded for a transition within Europe from a religious to a national concept of authority—from monarchical power to the authority of the people.

After Europe concluded the Thirty Years’ War in 1648—which “was inspired by religious motives and represents the apex of religious influence as a principle shaping social life” (Kohn, 1929, 14)—the final ascent of nationalist ideology began, eventually becoming the foundational worldview matrix of Europe for the next century and a half. The Peace of Westphalia brought forth new territorial states in Europe, separated from ecclesiastical influence—thus opening the door to the reevaluation of the monarch’s “divine right to rule” and facilitating the formation of political nations—and large empires. In practice, this meant the “victory of territorial princes over the universal authority of the emperor and the pope” (Morgenthau, 1948, 341); however, it also implied that the decline of smaller European crowns would soon follow that of the major ones in the long run. Shortly after the Thirty Years’ War, Thomas Hobbes proposed a narrowed version of the social contract according to which the state’s people were to give their consent that, in exchange for security, one or more sovereigns would rule over them. Essentially, Hobbes was on the trajectory of forming a political people (nation), yet, in light of the recent war, he still viewed it with suspicion and paternalistic oversight (Hobbes, 2013). To be fair, such a perspective on the people—on the nation—was not unjustified, given the level of information and education, which even today remain problematic variables in the (mis)use of the democratic process. By the end of the 17th century, John Locke gave significant impetus to the completion of constituting political peoples on European soil, writing that all humans possess free will,

the right to association, and the right to rebel against unjust authority. Essentially, Locke liberated the social community from subjugation to church and monarchy and, along with the right to rebellion (as a precursor to democratic expression), established the political people as the first and ultimate state authority. Economically and intellectually free people represented the source for constituting a political nation. When such a political people establish its own state—i.e., the state-nation—each individual is obliged “to submit to the decision of the majority” (Locke, 2002, 284), thereby inaugurating the democratic ideal.

Influenced by Locke’s ideas, Montesquieu also discussed the authority of the people and their right to constitute the state, arguing that “if the people as a whole has a principle, the parts that compose it will have it as well” (Montesquieu, 1989, 41). His division of power into executive, legislative, and judicial branches aimed at ensuring that the political people (nation) govern itself and the state as its contractual outcome. The historical apex of the idea of forming a political people in the civic sense was reached by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who, based on the equality of human beings as such—not their social positions (status, kinship, property)—proposed the concept of the social contract, according to which the people become the source and authority of the state (Lalović, 1979). Rousseau posited that “only those who unite have the right to determine the conditions of that society” (Rousseau, 1993, 53), thus forming a political community and governing it. With his teachings, the conceptual framework of the political nation was finalized, “providing the basic principles of modern politics that remain valid to this day” (Posavec, 1990, 47). Reflections on society, the nation, the state, and the source and outcome of authority during the 18th century were closely linked to the industrialization of social reality, which culminated at the end of that century. This process led to large-scale urban agglomerations, broader social assemblies based on status (workers, artisans, capitalists, etc.), and the accumulation of surplus capital, which, in parallel, fostered the development of culture, literacy, and general societal

maturation. In other words, the era of national consciousness had matured and become self-evident in accordance with historical circumstances. The first civic nations were formed through the war against the British crown on North American soil and later through the French Revolution. With the Declaration of Independence (1776), the Americans reiterated Locke's and Rousseau's ideas concerning the political people, which constitute itself and decide autonomously. This marked the initial stage of the disintegration of European monarchies, from which, over the following century, dozens of states would emerge or reestablish their statehood. The American War of Independence exemplified the specific formation of a civic nation arising from a social contract among the American inhabitants, who shared few significant ethnic bonds. Similarly, the French Revolution reflected the European intellectual heritage regarding the relationships between political people, state, and authority. The rebellion against monarchy resulted in military victory and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which constituted the French civic nation, as, for instance, "a small percentage of those living in the territory now recognized as France considered themselves 'French'" (Bilig, 2009, 54). A significant portion of the contemporary French population did not even speak the French language. Consequently, the French nation was founded on an ideological-territorial principle, which required the abstraction from the ethnic, religious, and cultural varieties that abounded on French territory.

Indeed, the state sought to transform heterogeneous populations into a civic nation, shaping the social community in the image of the state with its expansive bureaucracy, instruments for constructing new realities, and mechanisms permeating all forms of human existence. This historical period was characterized by the influence of major events fostering social cohesion, such that "individuals gravitate toward one another and even cluster more tightly. Hence follows the general fervor characteristic of revolutionary or creative epochs" (Durkheim, 1982, 196). Subsequently, these masses were imbued with invented

values and traditions around which people congregated, internalized, and transmitted to subsequent generations via educational and bureaucratic systems. The initial, formative phase of the nation “consisted essentially of confronting a dense network of cultural, racial, local, and linguistic categories of self-identification and social loyalty...The granular images in which individuals’ perceptions of who they were and were not were so intensively connected in traditional society were prompted by more general, vaguer, but no less charged conceptions of collective identity, grounded in a diffuse sense of shared destiny” (Geertz, 1973, 239). The process of producing the nationally imbued individual does not differ substantially from any mass-produced product in a Fordist system. Regardless of the composition of the social nucleus within a given territory, the construction of a nation follows an almost schematic ideological and bureaucratic pattern. The first phase leans on a major historical event—be it a revolution, war, or similar occurrence—essentially an idea that functions as a driving force for internal consolidation. This phase can also be analyzed through Giddens’ discourse on motivation for action. Gerc refers to it as the formative phase of nationalism, wherein from a heterogeneous cultural-religious-racial complex, or a model of local loyalties, a transformation of the symbolic framework begins, first altering the perception of social reality and subsequently reality itself. It constitutes an ideology that Ibrulj defines as “a value logic (...) through which political and social ontologies are constructed” (Ibrulj, 2005, 91). The prevailing ideas of a society—such as the ideology of the nation—always belong to the dominant social groups. Subsequently, as classified by Miroslav Hroch, three phases of the “birth” of a nation follow, in which the first two see the social elite and intelligentsia, in its broadest sense, focusing attention on a shared history and culture, to later transfer it into the wider social field in the final phase (Urlich–Veler, 2002). At this stage, we are already within the realm of Parsons’ functionalism, where society is shaped “from the top down” (Parsons, 1966).

In the phase of an already elaborated nation, one can observe figurations and games of interdependence among people who share the same space, desires, and fears (Elias, 2001). Thus, in their systematic actions, “states and regimes quite rightly supported state patriotism with the feelings and symbols of the ‘imagined community,’ regardless of their origin or source,” as it was a historical process during which it was “urgently necessary to ‘educate our masters,’ ‘create Italians,’ transform ‘peasants into Frenchmen,’ and bind them all to the nation and the flag” (Hobsbawm, 1993, 99). The Francophone model of “original” and “authentic” national values is demystified by John Urry, who elucidates the bureaucratic construction of social reality:

“While Bastille Day was invented in 1880 in France, *La Marseillaise* became the national anthem in 1879, July 14 was declared a national holiday in 1880, and Joan of Arc was elevated by the Catholic Church from obscurity only in the 1870s. More broadly, the idea of France - which began as an elite concept - was disseminated through a process analogous to colonization via communication (roads, railways, and above all newspapers...), so that by the end of the nineteenth century, popular and elite culture had merged as a result of various physical and imaginative mobilities. An important part of this process was the mass production of public monuments to the nation, especially in the rebuilt Paris—monuments that were traveled to, seen, discussed, and circulated through images, photographs, and later, films” (Urry, 2001, 148).

Shared language, culture, and historical heritage - dispersed through the educational system and the broader social structure - transformed the entire state into a “field of similitude” in which the newly formed nation “appears as a replica of the distant past and a historical awakening of communal ties” (Brubaker, 2004, 11). This is a construction whose transference to subsequent generations is crucial after its initial establishment. Some scholars refer to this as legitimization, “when values must be internalized by generations that have neither personal memory nor

experiential habituation to the given process” (Berger & Luckmann, 1992, 116). Parsons shared a similar view, emphasizing the recruitment of successive generations within a coherent social pattern (Parsons, 1951).

In essence, a nation requires a sense of contingency regarding its own being and that of its creation—the state—and subsequently the naturalness of the entire construct. For this reason, every nation necessitates that which it strives toward—institutions, or ultimately, the state itself. By equating the state with the nation, the French Revolution established a model of European and global national organization spanning the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. The collapse of empires at the end of the nineteenth century, the conclusion of the First World War and the emergence of a new geopolitical reality in the early twentieth century, the Second World War in the mid-century, and the collapse of communism by its end, initiated a dynamic process of global nationalization, which remains ongoing to this day. At the core of this new political era lies the idea of self-determination, a concept that had existed since the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. These values were reaffirmed in the discourse of Woodrow Wilson, the American president, who in 1918, representing the United States as a leading political nation, proclaimed nationality and the right to self-determination of all peoples as the supreme freedom of the new age (Harris, 2015).

The majority of nations shaped according to the Western political model largely completed their process of nationalization by the end of the nineteenth century. The processes observed globally throughout the twentieth century, however, reflected an Eastern form of nationalization, in which various peoples were “discovering themselves,” “awakening,” and “liberating” within plural societies and through diverse, mostly ideologically framed federal arrangements. Many of these nations fell under what Hegel and Marx once categorized as “ahistorical peoples,” who, through their praxis, nevertheless disproved such theoretical assertions. In instances where self-conception could not be fully realized, certain

forms of ethno-nationalism in the twentieth century assumed alternative, often temporary manifestations, such as assimilationist federalism, in which certain groups functioned as “dominant” ethno-nations, cloaking hegemonism under the guise of “unity.” In regions of Central and predominantly Eastern Europe, the fall of communism precipitated a resurgence of overt ethno-nationalism. With the collapse of the ideological scaffolding in states such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union, ethno-nationalism ascended to the political forefront. This part of Europe continued its nationalization two centuries delayed compared to Western political developments, demonstrating the resilience of (ethno-)nationalism across diverse political structures. Ulrich Beck interpreted this process as follows: “It was not the West that overthrew communism; it was the suppressed nationalisms. From this victory stems and endures the secret of nationalistic fascination, which now threatens with renewed cruelty to drown Europe in blood” (Beck, 2001, 224).

In other words, the nation has proven to be a powerful sentiment capable of outliving empires and ideologies, emerging in contexts previously considered historically concluded. Indeed, the moment the unifying, centripetal force of social order loses its potency—as observed yesterday in Central and Eastern Europe, and potentially tomorrow in the political West—beneath political-economic structures once deemed permanent and indestructible, the latent strength of a primordial conception of the nation is bound, sooner or later, to resurface.

3.0 The Nation in the Age of Globalization

The construction of a global world order in the contemporary political era began with the Treaty of Versailles, continued through the Atlantic Charter and the Yalta Conference, and was ultimately consolidated with the adoption of the United Nations Charter, which proclaimed the rights of nations to sovereignty and self-determination. Although this

development “elevated the nation and its self-determination...as the victors of the democratic transition” (Harris, 2015, 192), the continued process of world nationalization, in opposition to the discourse of globalization, represented a latent threat. In response, the United Nations more precisely defined self-determination to preempt potential ethno-national fragmentations across the globe (Kaseze, 2011). In practical terms, this meant that minorities and ethnic groups—under the aegis of “liberation” or “discovery” of their own nation—would not be permitted to secede from a sovereign state, whereas previously colonized peoples could exercise full rights to national emancipation and political independence. In place of former imperialism and recently concluded colonialism emerged the process of globalization, heralded as equal opportunity for all and as an idea of transcending the nation in the age of post-nationalism. This concept traces back to Immanuel Kant, who, even during the pre-revolutionary period in France, introduced the notions of a world citizen and the principle of international law (Kant, 2000). Kant argued that the universal legal recognition of humanity everywhere on Earth would enable physical, economic, cultural, and political mobility, with commerce and human interests transcending state borders and nationally divided worlds. Convinced that different states and nations would “gradually and voluntarily enter into a union, and in this way humanity would increasingly approach a cosmopolitan order” (Sladaček, 2011, 24), Kant positioned himself as an intellectual precursor of globalism based on the model of unity within national and state differentiation. This represented a prelude to the ideology of the post-national era. The process of globalization entails a model of interconnection encompassing large portions of the world in territorial, economic, cultural, political, institutional, informational, and national dimensions. It is a framework for cooperation among large and small, wealthy and impoverished, powerful and weak factors on the basis of shared interests and the idea of a world governed by peace, prosperity, economic-cultural openness, and legal accountability.

In the benevolent narrative, globalization implies the “liberation of the political from the categories of the nation-state” (Beck, 2003, 5). Some perceive it as a historical opportunity for all participants in this unwieldy process, whereas others consider globalization a euphemistic form of 20th- and 21st-century imperialism (Ottman, 2003). In other words, what was once termed the colonial era is today perceived merely as a lexical and methodological transformation, suggesting that although it has been renamed as hegemony, it retains the essence of its historical precursors. Contemporary understandings of globalization encompass an entire spectrum of theoretical attempts at conceptualization. Beck argues that all its political, military, informational... manifestations ultimately converge on a single dimension: the economic (Beck, 2003). He follows Kant’s reasoning in this, who perceived the satisfaction of the economic interests of all factors within a supranational model of coexistence as a means to overcome objections to such a concept. Given that economic interests are more easily satisfied at a personal rather than a collective (national) level, the modern phenomenon of globalization is accompanied by radical individualization, whereby the human being becomes a hybrid, mobile agent, stripped of identity markers, a non-national or transnational entity whose epicenter no longer houses the rigid sequences of the nation but a mere economic interest. The globalization process has operated both extensionally and intentionally; that is, “at the extensional level, it served to establish forms of social connectivity encompassing the entire world; in the intentional sense, it altered some of the most intimate and fundamental features of our everyday existence” (Giddens, 1996, 4). In other words, globalization entails the “dissolution of all solidity” in pursuit of economic efficiency (Bauman, 2011). Once the foundational elements of identity are stripped from an individual or a society, it transforms them into an anonymous entity floating within an undefined geopolitical space, within which they can be reshaped into virtually anything. This sequence constitutes the core of globalization’s influence on

society. The consequences of this transformation have been described by some authors in unflinchingly candid terms.

“Global culture, therefore, would consist of several analytically distinct elements: effectively advertised mass-produced goods, a bricolage of popular or ethnic styles and motifs stripped of their contexts, some general ideological discourses concerning ‘human rights and values,’ and a standardized quantitative and ‘scientific’ language of communication and evaluation, all underpinned by new information and telecommunications systems and their computerized technologies.” (Smith, 1998, 244).

Giddens refers to globalization as a “runaway world,” asserting that it “restructures, and deeply so, our ways of life. It is led by the West, bearing the strong imprint of American political and economic power” (Giddens, 2005, 27). The principal drivers of globalization are undoubtedly the United States (US) and the European Union (EU), which justifies the contemporary characterization of globalization as euphemistically westernized or Americanized. Described as a hegemonic force, it is noted that “the United States has more troops deployed abroad than Britain did at the height of its imperial glory” (Cooper, 2009, 64), revealing the core of the globalization process. The term hegemonic power is sometimes regarded as a euphemism for imperial logic, since “the difference between the one and the other would not be based on the substance itself” (Minkler, 2009, 61), but rather on a linguistic distinction that essentially denotes the same practice. In other words, the US “has taken control over vocabulary, concepts, and meanings in many domains. The problems they produce must be formulated in the words they provide... Possessing the power of information and technology, the US establishes, with the passive acquiescence of the peoples they dominate, a velvet oppression and a pleasant despotism” (Asad, 2008, 217). Examined historically, a similar model of global governance can be traced to the Roman, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman empires.

Some scholars consider the era of globalization an inevitable phase of the post-national age, arguing that “nationalism has accomplished its task: the world has become a world of nation-states” (Heywood, 2004, 236), and that humanity has therefore been compelled to transition to the next stage. Such narratives reveal a pronounced evolutionary discourse, whereby humans, society, nationality, and the state are seen as continuously developing, progressing from one stage to the next. Modernity was perceived as the solution to accumulated societal troubles, and the collapse of the idea of continuous ‘progress’ represented a moment of history fracturing as a developmental puzzle (Giddens, 1996). With the evolutionary discourse, it was expected, that in the era of globalization, nationalism would convert into post-nationalism and its various (non-) identity manifestations, all characterized by the diverse dislocation of humans from the sphere of state and nation.

Instead, the collapse of ‘progress’ occurred, a standstill before which humanity froze, as it did at the beginning and end of the Second World War, in connection with which Lyotard, Adorno, and Horkheimer observed that the entire era of Enlightenment ‘progress’ ended in the camps of Auschwitz. Did the end of the 20th century in Eastern Europe offer a different answer? Centuries of discourse on the continuous benevolent, intellectual, and social development of humanity culminated in an unprecedented sequence of barbarism. A similar phenomenon occurred with globalization and its entire legacy, among which the international legal and security order now juts out like shattered historical monuments, alongside the ‘benevolent’ militarization of the world and a complex of supranational institutions turned into either useless buildings or, euphemistically, instruments of hegemonic powers that truly govern them. On the other hand, the global economy, the technologization of the entire social reality, the hybridization of space, time, and identity, the attempt to rearrange human inner being and external habitat—all of this became broken promises that transformed into disappointment, questions, and fear. In the entire process of the collapse of globalizati-

on and what political science calls the international order, a dialectical question arises: have global culture, the attempt to form a transnational, mobile identity, and the process of depriving individuals and nations of their identity anchors truly succeeded in destroying the national on both general and individual levels? Or has the globalization-induced fear instead become a machine that revitalized the nation and the state as a secure refuge in an era of globalization that resembles a Leviathan without control? What actually happened to the being of the national in the global era? Some sociologists and political scientists argue that the national is faltering, asserting that “the fragmented national or ethnic space and its anchoring in an isolated temporal, cultural, or industrial context is transformed in the name of a compressed spatio-temporal environment in which only mobile or profitable relations and partnerships are realized” (Ibrulj, 2005, 31). Similarly, just as Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the end of history, Erik Hobsbawm did the same—arguably hastily—with nationalism as an ideology. He was certainly not alone. Similar opinions have been expressed by numerous scholars, claiming that “the state or nation has already become too dispersed and abstract a concept for people to possess such a sense of belonging and citizenship that would prevent them from gravitating toward individualism” (Swift, 2008, 203), and that “nations have lost most of the sovereignty they once held, and politicians have largely lost the power to influence events... The era of the nation-state is over” (Giddens, 2005, 30). From a Bosnian political science perspective, the situation appeared as if the national identity had been declared unstable ground over which the state and its bureaucratic apparatus could exercise less and less control; in other words, “it is the ground on which processes of mundialization take root and relativize the dogma of the national state’s sovereignty in the space of spiritual-cultural, collective-psychological, and normative ideals and the actual expectations of the nation” (Zgodić, 1997, 343).

One might say that the highly raised victorious flag of globalization was elevated prematurely. On the other hand, the nation has demonstrated itself as an exceptionally resilient alloy through multiple and challenging historical processes, capable of surviving empires, ideologies, and wars, and, at moments when it was considered a completed stage of humanity's "development," it has returned to historical reality. Many were mistaken in declaring nationalism a completed phase of human development, including Hobsbawm and Durkheim, who believed "that attachment to an ethnic group would weaken under the influence of reason, enlightenment, and modernity" (Malešević, 2009, 246). The post-communist era is just one example reflecting the enduring strength of the nation, as "the collapse of the Soviet Union, national conflicts in the successor states, ethno-national wars in the Caucasus and North Caucasus, the bloodshed in the former Yugoslavia: does this not—one might ask—vividly demonstrate the reality and power of the nation? Does it not show that nations could survive as solidaristic groups, as focal points of identity and loyalty, and as foundations for collective action, despite the efforts of the Soviet and Yugoslav states to break them?" (Brubaker, 1996, 17). Furthermore, globalization itself, as the idea of the continual expansion of power by one or more hegemons toward the rest of the world—or, figuratively, toward the periphery—has historically recognized weaknesses of its own. Indeed, the dispersion of power has always represented a cause for the breakdown of structures unable to maintain a territorially and functionally diffused order. Within such relations, the nation continues to exist as a resilient structure, regardless of the hegemonic pressure of globalization. Furthermore, most nations possess their own state; that is, despite all supranational and mundialist forms, the formation of transnational identities, the legal erasure of inter-state borders, and so forth, it must still be noted that, for example, "there is no people of Europe, only the peoples of the member states" (Isensee, 1998, 13). Consequently, it is considered that national habitats – states – "function best when they correspond with national groups"

(Swift, 2008, 202). In other words, the nation has the strength to “oppose the creation of ‘supranational’ organizations through the strengthening of national consciousness and power” (Lerotić, 1984, 166), and “nation-states remain truly powerful” (Giddens, 2005, 38).

Events that occupy the world’s spotlight almost invariably carry the imprint of nationalism, which led Smith to ask, “why national identity remains so ubiquitous, multifaceted, and pervasive” (Smith, 1998, 248). Brubaker observes that the post-communist era again testifies to the fact “that nations could survive as solidaristic groups, as focal points of identity and loyalty” (Brubaker, 1996, 17), meaning that the strength of the nation has permeated global existence for more than two centuries. This reflects a clear message: the nation is an exceptionally living organism, an atom of world society, and an agent of the global social structure, without which it is impossible to develop narratives about global sociologies that would, one after another, exclude the identity foundations of its factors. In other words, although the era of globalization has produced a shift in the position and perception of the entire ontological framework of world society and the individual, our age remains determined by the construct of the nation and the ideology of nationalism.

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