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Shampa Biswas

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W(h)ither the Nation-state? National and State Identity in the Face of Fragmentation and Globalisation

SHAMPA BISWAS

It is commonplace to hear of the threat to the nation-state in the contemporary world. Such threats are seen to emanate from many different quarters, at different levels of the international system. Donald Levine classifies these forces into three levels that exist in relation to nation-states (or the international level)—subnational, transnational and supranational.¹ Forces at the “subnational” (or sometimes called “local”) levels occur from assertions of identity based on “blood, race, language, locality, religion, or tradition” or what Levine, following Geertz, calls “primordial” ties that are not effectively accommodated by the modern nation-state, thought to be earlier associated with the post-colonial new states of Africa and Asia and now recognised as an element of nation-states all over the world. Without going into the problematic use of the category of “primordial”, given that all forms of social identity, and primordiality itself, are always socially constructed, I would like to add to this list local claims to resources (assertions of land rights by indigenous groups, access to developmental resources by women’s groups, etc.), political participation (demands for democratisation and decentralisation), social measures (demands for provision of basic services, laws for protection from domestic violence, etc.) that often question the legitimacy and add pressure to the authority and power of the nation-state.

Forces at the “transnational” level include, first and foremost, the giant corporations such as General Motors and IBM. It is clear that multinational corporations (MNCs) which consisted of largely self-sufficient subsidiaries of parent companies being located overseas are now being increasingly replaced by transnational corporations (TNCs) in which production itself is organised globally. In this new structure of production the cessation of production in or cut-off from any particular subsidiary, say in the time of war, would impair the ability of any other subsidiary to function effectively, unlike earlier MNCs that could be nationalised and turned to produce for the host economy.² To the extent that modern nation-states depend on the activities of TNCs, this new structure of production has serious inter-national implications. Also included among the transnational forces are intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), such as the

1. Donald N. Levine, “Sociology and the Nation-state in an Era of Shifting Boundaries”, *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (1996), pp. 253–266. See especially pp. 261–263.

2. See Peter F. Drucker, “The Global Economy and the Nation-state”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 5 (1997), pp. 159–171.

United Nations, that constrain and enable existing nation-states in different ways depending on existing power distributions and normative understandings. International non-governmental organisations (INGOs), such as Amnesty International and the International Red Cross, also influence, curtail and encourage state policies and practices.

Finally, at the “supranational” level exist assertions to identity that transcend national boundaries, such as in the idea of Europeanness that undergirds the EU attempt, or the category of the “free world”, etc. One could include here as well the many globalising forces represented in Benjamin Barber’s characterisation of “McWorld”, the creation of more encompassing normative frameworks based on, for example, human rights that are often brought to bear in judging state practices, and, most importantly, the global diffusion of market liberalisation with all its attendant consequences. This globalising impetus could also be identified as a fourth “global” level. In general, retaining the analytical primacy of national borders for now (which I will question later in the paper), it is possible to reclassify these forces into two broad categories—forces that emanate from inside the nation-state or forces of “fragmentation”, and forces that come from outside the nation-state or forces of “globalisation”. In a book that deals with boundary production, Andrew Linklater and John Macmillan begin with “normative questions which arise now that the sovereign state is threatened by the interlinked processes of globalization and political fragmentation” since, as they point out, “the current challenge to the sovereign state occurs because of global processes and also because of the rise of identity politics within previously secure national boundaries”.³ Globalisation and fragmentation have become the twin themes that recur with some frequency in the scholarly and popular literature that exercises itself over the future of the nation-state.⁴

There are those then that bemoan or celebrate the demise of the nation-state as a viable and durable form of political community and collective identity. Jean Marie Guehenno, France’s former ambassador to the European Union predicted “the end of the nation” in a book by the same name, as globalisation and transnational processes slowly grow to constrain state autonomy, leading to a new global order.⁵ Journalists Mathew Horsman and Andrew Marshall speculate on the future as the modern nation-state is ravaged by a globalising liberal economy, and state power and authority seeps both upward into regional and global regimes and organisations, and downwards into local government, nations and tribes.⁶ This impending sense, at least in the journalistic literature, that the nation-state is somehow in “crisis” led the journal *Political Studies* to devote an entire issue to the question of the “Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State?”,

3. Andrew Linklater and John Macmillan, “Introduction: Boundaries in Question”, in John MacMillan and Andrew Linklater (eds.), *Boundaries in Question: New Directions in International Relations* (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 1–16, pp. 3–7.

4. See, for instance, Ian Clark, *Globalization and Fragmentation: International Relations in the 20th Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) as well as the best-selling *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman’s celebratory account of globalisation. Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999).

5. Jean Marie Guehenno, Victoria Elliot (trans.), *The End of the Nation-state* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

6. Mathew Horsman and Andrew Marshall, *After the Nation-state: Citizen, Tribalism and the New World Disorder* (London: HarperCollins, 1995).

later reproduced as a book edited by John Dunn.⁷ Much of this sense of crisis comes from uncertainty about the future, associated somewhat also with the discrediting of socialist global utopias as well as the end of Cold War balance-of-power politics. While there are some who portend in these changes the emergence of “global cultures” and “global civil society”, popular (and policy-making) imagination, at least in large parts of the Western world, have been captured by Samuel Huntington’s vision of a future riven by “civilisational conflicts” (in place of conflicts between nation-states) and Robert Kaplan’s dark prophecy of the anarchy and chaos that lies ahead.⁸

The field of international relations has been premised to a large extent on the ontological primacy of the nation-state. As Robert Keohane had pointed out, the state-centric assumption forms the “hard core” of political realism, both in its classical and neorealist expressions, so that world politics can be analysed in terms of “unitary” and “rational” states as the most important actors.⁹ This is most clearly the case in the field of security studies where the nation-state remains the (often unspoken referent) “to be secured” in most analyses.¹⁰ But even critiques of realism and neorealism that have challenged this state-centrism by pointing to the variety of non-state actors and the different levels of global interaction, have often accepted the givenness and significance of nation-states. David Campbell has pointed out how this is true of much of international political economy, as in the literature on transnationalism, international regimes, hegemonic stability, as well as in the works of someone like Alexander Wendt who has self-consciously attempted to problematise nation-states.¹¹ If the nation-state is really in crisis, this then has serious implications for the discipline of international relations.

But is the nation-state really in crisis? While many in the discipline of international relations have reiterated the continuing relevance of the nation-state, there has been little attempt to examine closely the processes through which the nation-state is reproduced in the face of globalising and fragmenting forces. This paper argues that much of the prognosis on the end of the nation-state confuses the different and separate (although related) aspects of nation building and state making. The paper suggests that while forces of fragmentation have to do with the production and reproduction of “nations”, forces of globalisation concern to a large degree (although not entirely) issues of “state” authority and competence. Further, I try to show that there is no *necessary* relation between

7. See *Political Studies*, Vol. 42, Special Issue (1994); and John Dunn (ed.), *The Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State?* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995).

8. See Samuel S. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72 (1993), pp. 22–49; and Robert Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy: How Scarcity, Crime, Overpopulation, Tribalism, and Disease are Rapidly Destroying the Social Fabric of our Planet”, *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 273, No. 2 (1994), pp. 44–77.

9. See Robert Keohane, “Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond”, in Robert Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). Also see Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

10. See Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (eds.), *Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) for an excellent collection of articles that critique this tendency.

11. See David Campbell, “Political Prosaics, Transversal Politics, and the Anarchical World”, in Michael Shapiro and Hayward Alker (eds.), *Challenging Boundaries* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 7–31.

the emergence of globalising and fragmenting forces and the end of the nation-state. Rather, the question is how such forces affect the ongoing and continuous process of the negotiation of national and state identity. To a large extent, part of the anxiety generated by the impending sense of crisis itself is a result of the valorisation of the nation-state as a unit of international relations, to the neglect of other entities and other boundary-producing processes in the world. In that sense, such anxieties bolster the state's own monopolisation of questions relating to the "political", and hence are conservative both in their formulation and in their political effects. The important question is not so much whether the nation-state is in crisis, but how national and state identities are renegotiated and reconfigured in the face of fragmentation and globalisation, and the political implications of such reworkings. I begin the paper with a conceptual examination of the nation-state as a historical-political form. I then move on to interrogating the effects of fragmenting and globalising logics on the nation-state form and then conclude with some thoughts on the political and epistemological motivations and implications of contemporary anxieties relating to the demise of the nation-state.

The Nation-state as a Historical-Political Form

The ideal articulation of "nation" as a form of cultural community and the "state" as a territorial, political unit is now widely accepted and often taken as unproblematic. Yet scholars of nationalism point out that that was not always the case. That every nation deserves its autonomy and identity through its own sovereign state (even though many may not demand it) is an ideal that many trace to the French Revolution. As Cobban points out, whereas before the French Revolution there had been no necessary connection between the state as a political unit and the nation as a cultural one, it became possible and desirable since then to think of a combination of these two in a single conception of the nation-state.¹² That this still remains an "ideal" and one vastly unrealised, as in the existence of several "multi-national" states, is also largely recognised,

12. Alfred Cobban, *The Nation State and National Self Determination* (London: HarperCollins, 1969). See Istvan Hont for a more unorthodox historical interpretation that questions that nationalism is a post-French Revolution development and problematises this alleged historical rupture at the time of the French Revolution. Hont argues that the process of nationalism started with the formation of the new post-Renaissance composite states of Europe that included the rise of absolutism in its "national" manifestations. Analysing the different and contradictory discourses of the revolution, Hont argues that the beginning of the revolution can be seen as much as anything else as a revolution *against* the prevailing nationalist system of international relations, giving rise to the hope at the time that the nation-state was entering its crisis. Only with the onset of war (which initially was anti-nationalist and anti-imperialist) and the Terror did the Jacobin state become overly nationalist and led later to the more benign spread of nationalism across Europe. Hont points out that it was in fact the *failure* of anti-nationalism Jacobinism that fed nationalism, and the internationalist vision of the Jacobins passed into the modern socialist tradition and Marxism. See Istvan Hont, "The Permanent Crisis of a Divided Mankind: Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State in Historical Perspective", *Political Studies*, Vol. 42, Special Issue (1994), pp. 166–231. See especially pp. 217–231. Sanjay Seth also points to this tension between internationalism/universalism and nationalism/particularism in the French Revolution, a tension that haunts the entire history of modernity. See Sanjay Seth, "Nationalism in/and Modernity", in Joseph A. Camilleri, Anthony P. Jarvis and Albert J. Paolini (eds.), *The State in Transition: Reimagining Political Space* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

although much of international relations theory fails to follow through on the implications of that “reality”.

Typologies of nation-states and nationalisms are quite common in the literature. E.K. Francis draws a distinction between “ethnic” nations that are based on belief in common descent and a sense of solidarity and common identity, and “demotic” nations that are based on shared administrative and military institutions, common territorial boundaries for protection and the mobility of goods and people.¹³ This is similar to the distinction often made between “cultural nations” based on ascriptive criteria such as language, customs, religion or some form of primordiality, and “political nations” that are more contractual and derive from shared institutions, shared citizenship and a sense of shared history. Some point out that the latter form of nations is based more on “civic” nationalism, as opposed to the “ethnic” nationalism characteristic of the former type of nations. These distinctions are, of course, all ideal-types in that all existing nationalisms combine cultural and political elements, or civic and ethnic nationalisms in different ways.¹⁴

There has been some tension in the literature on nationalisms between the extent to which culture exists as a given resource for the constitution of nations and the extent to which culture has to be invented by nationalist elites. This is the debate between “primordialist” and “instrumentalist” theories of nationalism on the place and importance of culture in the constitution of nation-states. On the one hand, the primordialist approach, evident in the early work of Geertz, Shils and in the socio-biological theory of Van den Berghe, argues that ethnic and cultural attachments are pre-givens, or at least assumed givens, and appear “natural” to members of a group.¹⁵ As against this, the instrumentalist approach, evidenced to varying degrees in the works of Brass, Hobsbawm and Nairn, argues that ethnic attachments are often invented and manipulated by elites to construct the nation as a privileged source of a group’s loyalty.¹⁶ In some ways, the tension here is one of emphasis. But ultimately I believe that such a tension detracts from the issue that *all national identities are constructed*. To the extent that

13. E.K. Francis, *Interethnic Relations: An Essay in Sociological Theory* (New York: Elsevier, 1976).

14. It might be useful here also to bring in the distinction sometimes made between the nationalist version associated with German Herderian romanticism grounded in particularist conceptions of the “volk” and the version associated with French Enlightenment rationalism such as in Rousseau that is grounded in a universalist, rationalist, contractual conception of the nation. See Silverman for a critique of this problematic opposition between the German and French conceptions of the nation and its implications for thinking about racism in the French context; Maxim Silverman, *Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism and Citizenship in Modern France* (London: Routledge, 1992).

15. Clifford Geertz, *Old Societies and New States* (New York: The Free Press, 1963); Edward Shils, “Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties”, *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. VIII, No. 2, (1957), pp. 130–145; Pierre Van den Berghe, “Race and Ethnicity: A Sociological Perspective”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (1978).

16. Paul Brass, “Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity among the Muslims of South Asia”, in D. Taylor and M. Yapp (eds.), *Political Identity in South Asia* (London: Curzon Press, 1979); Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions” and “Mass-producing Traditions: Europe 1870–1914”, in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1–14; Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-nationalism*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 1977). Anthony Smith’s approach, which investigates the ethnic origins of nations, is somewhat more sophisticated than most primordialist approaches in that it recognises that the meanings of the “myth-symbol complex” that grounds a relatively durable ethnic can change over time; Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

what is important in constructing national identity is a *belief* in a common heritage and destiny, all nationalist ideologies have to work with the existing distribution of knowledge in society at a particular time and place. The issue here is of the social meanings that come to be attached to different aspects of individual and group identity.

In other words, what ethnic or other distinctions become the significant cultural markers in any nationalism depends on the particular socio-historic conditions within which particular nationalist imaginings emerge. A linguistic nationalism would find both the separate existence of England and the United States, and the common existence of French and English Canadians problematic. Most ethnic and religious nationalisms would also run into similar problems elsewhere. In other words, there are no “natural” nationalities. There is no a priori manner in which peoples can be made into nations. It is the work of nationalism to construct or produce a “nation”. In the words of Benedict Anderson, the nation has to be “imagined”. Nations are imagined “because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”.¹⁷ It is through nationalist ideology that this communion is constructed. Anderson traces the development of nationalism to the development of print-capitalism, which helped to produce and disseminate a common culture to ground the national imagination.¹⁸ Regardless of what basis is used to ground this communion, nations are ultimately based on what Etienne Balibar has called “fictive ethnicities”. It is the work of nationalist ideology to “ethnicise” a community.¹⁹ It is through the representational labour of nationalist ideology that a community is constructed as if it formed a natural communion with its unique and singular origin and destiny.²⁰

Nationalist movements over the world have and continue to produce these communities, that sometimes demand their own states leading to irredentist movements, and at other times seek various concessions and accommodations within the political parameters of existing states. But “nation building” has always been a project of the state as well and the widespread existence of global norms on sovereignty and self-determination (and the continuing appeal of the ideal of the “nation-state”) now ensure that existing states themselves have to engage to some extent in attempts at nation building. In other words, *it is not simply that nations often seek and demand states, but states need nations as well.*²¹

17. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 15.

18. Kate Manzo thinks it important to distinguish the invention or creation of nationalism (which has a longer and pre-modern historical lineage) from the ability of modern capitalism’s capacity to disseminate it. Kathryn A. Manzo, *Creating Boundaries: The Politics of Race and Nation* (London: Lynne Rienner, 1996), pp. 8–13.

19. Etienne Balibar, “Racism and Nationalism” and “The Nation Form: History and Ideology”, in E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein (eds), *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991).

20. The place of symbolism and ceremony in concretising and popularising the imagined community in what Eric Hobsbawm has called the “invention of tradition” plays an important role here. Hobsbawm focuses on three major innovations that have accompanied the invention of national tradition—primary education, invention of public ceremonies and mass production of public monuments; Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*.

21. Without going into the enormous literature on states, let me briefly elaborate my theory of the state here. States, very simply, are governance authorities with political sovereignty over a defined territory. While the authority of the state might be maintained through its monopoly on the

Claims to “nationhood” give the state authority over its people as well as international standing within a larger system of states. It is the way for states to seek and ensure legitimacy within a system of states in which the ideal of the nation-state is a universal organising principle for collective identity. This is perhaps part of the reason that state discourse hardly ever refers to “nations” within its borders, even though particular groups might themselves or by others be designated as such. States instead prefer to use the safer label of “ethnicities” (or “tribes” or “races”) for such groups.²² State legitimacy requires the state to

Footnote 21 continued

legitimate use of force, its legitimacy also depends on its ability to claim rightful obedience from its citizens. In modern states the latter is often secured not so much through coercive force but through “consent”, and nation building aids in that process of securing consent. (Of course, nation building is but one form through which this consent is secured. State legitimacy may be established through invoking the “legality” of state powers and actions or through establishing “democratic” forms of governance that involve different levels of popular political participation, etc.) This draws on Gramsci’s notion of the state as “coercion plus hegemony”, where direct political power is exercised through control over the coercive forces of the state apparatus that includes the police and military, and “ideological hegemony” is established through the influence of ideas and institutions within civil society (through the ideological state apparatuses or the ISAs, like schools, churches, families, as in Althusser’s work) and it is in the latter arena that consent is secured. In other words, the modern state is not a unitary, singular structure but a complex entity composed of a variety of institutional apparatuses, not simply reducible to governmental organisations. State power is established through a network of institutions that spans the political, economic and social arenas. The development of the modern welfare state, in which the legitimacy of the state derives to a large extent from its ability to provide for the economic and social needs of its citizens, and is a vehicle for social and economic justice and equality, is important for my argument in the latter part of my paper. See Gregor McLennan, David Held and Stuart Hall (eds.), *The Idea of the Modern State* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1984); and Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back in* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) for very useful discussions of the state. At the international level, the principle of “sovereignty”, defined both internally and externally, establishes the state’s authority over a defined territory. John Ruggie has described how the modern conception of sovereignty is based on a form of territorial rule that is “possessive” and “exclusivist” in its organisation of political space. John Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis”, in Robert Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 131–157.

22. Oomen makes the distinction between ethnic groups, nations and nation-states on the basis of claims to territory. He defines an ethnic group as a collectivity without homeland, composed essentially of migrants among whom there is a dissociation between culture and territory. If an ethnic group aspires to and successfully establishes a *moral claim* over the territory to which it migrated and hence identifies as its homeland, it becomes a nation, and if it then aspires to and successfully establishes a *legal claim* over that territory, it becomes a nation-state. See T.K. Oomen, “State, Nation and Ethnic: The Processual Linkages”, in Peter Ratcliffe (ed.), *Race, Ethnicity and Nation: International Perspectives on Social Conflict* (London: UCL Press, 1994), pp. 26–46. The idea of “territoriality” is of course essential to the conception of the modern nation-state which, as John Ruggie has shown, remains under-theorized in most extant international relations theory despite its geospatial emphasis. Rudolfo Stavenhagen points to the different salience of “territory” in civic nationalisms in which territory determines the legal unit of the sovereign state to which citizenship belongs and ethnic nationhood in which territory serves as a necessary referent, not so much as the space to which citizenship rights and legal systems apply, but as the historic homeland. Rudolfo Stavenhagen, *Ethnic Conflicts and the Nation-state* (London: Macmillan, 1996); see especially ch. 1. The concept of “diaspora”, of course, both creates and disrupts this association of the nation with territory in quite interesting ways. Some authors have talked about “deterritorialized nation-state building” as a new and significant form of post-colonial nationalism, which attempts to incorporate transmigrants into the body politic of their states of origin, and in doing so reflect and reinforce the division of the entire globe into nation-states. See Linda Basch, Glick Schiller and Cristina Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized States* (Longhorne: Gordon & Breech, 1994). Arjun

speak in the name of a singular nation, and this generates efforts toward nation building. These efforts are more evident and stark at times of crisis such as war, but in reality are always in existence in more subtle ways through various state policies and programmes, as well as through the ideological state apparatuses in civil society. At the same time, the efficacy of the state also affects to an extent the legitimacy of the nation in the eyes of the various social groups within the state. The extent to which the state is able to meet the needs, expectations and demands of different groups ensures at least partially the extent to which these groups feel a sense of civic (if not cultural) loyalty to the nation that the state claims to represent.

In that sense state building and nation building have become simultaneous and symbiotic processes. Yet for analytical purposes it is perhaps better not to conflate these two processes because, even if the ends they seek are somewhat similar or complementary, the processes remain somewhat different. State building occurs through the penetration and integration of the territorial economy, polity and society and speaks to questions of political authority and effective governance. Nation building is the construction of a cohesive cultural community that can demand citizen loyalty and commitment.²³ As I will show in the next section, the fragmentation of nation-states refers to the second process, and in particular to the inability of the state to build cohesive nations, while those that point to the effects of globalisation on weakening the nation-state often (but not exclusively) refer to problems with state building. Each of these, as I will argue below, have different implications for the future of the nation-state.

Fragmentation of the Nation-state

The legitimacy of the nation-state depends to a large extent on its coherence, unity and stability in the eyes of its citizenry or, in other words, of the ability of the state to project a unified nation. The imagined nations, as Anderson points out, present themselves as “communities” “because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship”.²⁴ Or at least the depth and equality of that comradeship determines to an extent the legitimacy that the state enjoys with different social groups. Part of the project of the state is to seek consent from its citizens as to the depth and equality of that comradeship. Yet the national space is riven by many differences and conflicts—among ethnicities, races, religious groups, classes, genders, etc. Each of those differences threatens the coherence and unity of the national fabric. Most of the literature on fragmentation focuses on ethnic (and religious) conflicts within existing states (these

Footnote 22 continued

Appadurai also speaks to this deterritorialisation of contemporary cultural identity in pointing to how the disjunctive processes of late capitalism, the media, cultural politics, etc. have “globalized” ethnicity which, even though always constructed, was at one time more localized. It is an interesting feature of the contemporary world that such globally dispersed identities have the ability to ignite the kind of intimacy and political passions that were once the province of geographically tighter groups. Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”, *Public Culture*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1990), pp. 1–24.

23. See Hont, *op. cit.*

24. Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

conflicts, of course, usually also have a class and gender basis to them). Nation building requires that such ethnic and religious conflicts are effectively contained by the state. Even though “assimilation” has been an avowed goal of many states historically, Talal Asad has pointed out that hegemonic power works not so much through suppressing differences by homogenisation, as through differentiating and marginalising.²⁵ The “nation” in projects of the state does not represent a singular cultural space so much as a hierarchy of cultural spaces. What Rudolfo Stavenhagen calls an “ethnocratic state”—a nation-state controlled essentially by a majority or dominant ethnies, able to exercise cultural hegemony over the rest of the nation—is the rule rather than the exception in the modern system of nation-states.²⁶ The success of nation-building depends on the extent to which the state is able to secure a broad measure of “consent” on this hierarchy. The national project requires the construction of what Asad calls a “cultural core” that becomes the “essence” of “the nation”. At the most basic level, fragmentation occurs when the state is no longer (if ever) able to effectively secure consent on this cultural core.²⁷

States have a variety of available means to meet the demands of ethnic and religious groups within their borders. To the extent that assimilation is no longer considered possible or effective, or even desirable, states can and do make attempts to accommodate such demands through various political and institutional mechanisms. Regardless of how vociferous and well organised those demands are, which might make a polity quite unstable in certain situations, fragmentation refers more specifically to situations where such demands are linked with claims to territory. Or using Oomen’s definition (see footnote 22), it is when an ethnic group establishes a moral claim to territory within a state that one can speak of subnationalisms, or what are sometimes called ethnonationalisms. Many states that are classified as nation-states within international relations have always been such multi-national states—like in India where different ethnic and linguistic groups are regionally organised on the basis of claims to territory, or as in the case of the Scots and Welsh within Britain. Such moral claims to territory might not necessarily generate separatist or irredentist movements. Nations within existing states might subordinate (if never completely) more local claims to identity to constructions of more encompassing nationhood (as often happens more effectively in times of crisis), or such overlapping forms of national and subnational forms of identity might co-exist comfortably (even if sometimes contradictorily). But it is the existence of such subnationalisms that creates the possibility of the fragmentation of the nation-state. Ultimately, this can be a crisis of the nation-state because such nationalisms threaten to fragment one of the central bases of state sovereignty—the *territorial integrity of the existing nation-state*.

I will not go here into the structural conditions of possibility for fragmentation

25. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

26. Stavenhagen, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

27. Of course the process of nation building (and state building) is an ongoing, continuous process and nation-states are never finished, complete entities. Boundaries, both within and outside the nation-state have to be constantly produced and reproduced. In one sense, internal differences within a state are never completely subdued, even if state rhetoric continues to assert the identity of “the people” as the basis of its legitimacy. The question here is, when do such differences become so pronounced that state authority and legitimacy is seriously impaired?

to become a real issue within any existing nation-state. There are some writers who link the recent resurgence of ethnic and religious nationalisms to the end of the Cold War and the security lid placed on ethnic conflicts through super-power rivalry. Some authors have commented on how the impersonal market forces of globalisation or the increasing global dominance of American cultural icons lead to assertions of identity. Perhaps one can still find capitalism's uneven development as "nation-producing", as did Tom Nairn for the early period of nation building after the French and the Industrial Revolutions, so that the ethnicisation of class and regional differences leads to politicised nationalist imaginings.²⁸ Or maybe the civic (more than the cultural) nationalism of many modern states makes the nation-state (unlike ethnicity or religion), simply too large, amorphous and psychically distant to be the object of *intimate* affection.²⁹ The point here is that fragmentation occurs and is occurring rapidly in the world, as evidenced in Bosnia, Rwanda, Spain, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Canada, to name a very few geographically diverse examples. Fragmentation occurs when there is a disarticulation between the state as a spatial unit (with fixed territory) with the spatial claims of the nation(s) in whose name(s) it speaks. The question here is: what implication does such fragmentation have for the future of the nation-state?

The ultimate concern with fragmentation, as I mentioned above, is that it threatens the territorial integrity of existing nation-states. But as Istvan Hont points out, even though there might be legitimate grounds for concern over the territorial integrity of contemporary states devolving into smaller territorial units, this should be seen as a "triumph" rather than a "crisis" of the nation-state.³⁰ Fragmentation is a threat to the existence of *particular* states, rather than the system of nation-states. It represents the failure of particular states to hold on to the "spatiality" (both geopolitically and culturally) of their claims to legitimacy. But in more general terms, fragmentation represents the success of the *ideal* of the nation-state—that every nation deserves its own state. This seems more obvious in the case of the end of empire and its dissolution into independent polities each claiming the title of nation-state, first in the post-World War II era of decolonisation, and more recently in the break-up of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc countries. The anxieties that fragmentation generates is with respect to what are seen as more established and thereby "legitimate" nation-states, most notably perhaps in the case of Western states like Britain, France and Spain, as well as in the case of some of the more stable post-colonial societies such as India and Kenya. But as previously argued, most such states are also based on a variety of internal exclusions, and the "cultural core" in nation-building efforts often represents, or is perceived as, a form of cultural hegemony of the dominant ethnic/racial group. If subordinate groups that find their identities submerged, marginalised or erased through such nation-building efforts of the state are able to politicise group consciousness through laying

28. Nairn, *op. cit.*

29. Robin Cohen develops this point to explain how diasporas form and are sustained despite their dispersal among a variety of nation-states that try to assimilate them in different ways. Robin Cohen, "Diasporas and the Nation-state: From Victims to Challengers", *International Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (1996), pp. 507–520.

30. See Hont, *op. cit.*, pp. 176–177.

moral claims to territory, these should be seen as legitimate ethical claims to nation-state status.

As mentioned previously, groups within existing states might not make such claims to territory, instead preferring accommodation through the available institutional mechanisms of the existing state, or they make claims to territory and do not seek separation from the state, but more decentralisation of powers and territorial autonomy within the existing polity. These efforts also bolster my argument that efforts by groups (defined ethnically, racially or nationally) that see themselves as disadvantaged within a polity to seek more political power strengthens (rather than weakens) the principle on which the ideal of the nation-state is based—that culturally cohesive communities (such as the nation) can lay legitimate moral claim to political autonomy.³¹ In the extreme case this leads to the emergence of new nation-states. One can, of course, ask: what is the end to the possible cycle of nation production and the dissolution of existing nation-states? Hont points out that the “modern idea of nationalism holds that the bottom line of such devolution is reached when the political community of a state is ethnically homogenized”.³² But if nations (ethnicities) are always to some extent cultural constructions, this process of devolution can be an endless process. But ultimately this is a practical question (of political viability) rather than a question of theory. Theoretically, fragmentation of the nation-state “celebrates” the nation-state ideal and is its logical outcome, and in doing so reproduces the nation-state system (even if not in its contemporary composition).

Globalisation and the Nation-state

The effects of globalisation on the nation-state are somewhat more complex. Forces outside the nation-state can constrain, enable and influence the nation-state in a variety of ways. For the purposes of this discussion, I categorise these forces into two groups—forces of economic globalisation and forces of cultural globalisation, although the two are quite closely related in many ways.

31. Using a communitarian perspective, Anthony Black believes that “it is as reasonable and as realistic to regard a *variety* of communities as the building-blocks of international society as it is to regard the particular kind of community we call nation in this way”. Anthony Black, “Nation and Community in the International Order”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 19 (1993), pp. 81–89. Even though the salience of nations does derive from the strength of national allegiances (that people are socialised into from their birth), Black points out that nationhood is one claim among others, the essential bond of shared ways of life and ideology is not peculiar only to nations, and the national bond is not necessarily stronger nor does the nation have any special moral claim. Black also points out that the link between the nation and the state also has no particular moral legitimacy, and if the legitimacy of statehood depends on the authority of the law and protection from violence, then other groups also qualify for that status. Hence, nations, like other forms of community, should be subject to the higher moral demands of law and rights, applicable even to outsiders, just as labour unions and business firms are (*ibid.*). I am not suggesting that the claims of all “nations” are by themselves legitimate or just simply because they claim some kind of cultural unity or authenticity. In other words, like Anderson, I do not believe that nationalism in itself is a “good” or “bad” thing. The legitimacy of any nationalist claim needs to be interrogated with respect to issues of “democracy”—who speaks for the community, who is marginalized in this construction, how does the community see itself vis-à-vis other communities, etc., are all important questions that cannot be settled a priori without careful, contextual explorations.

32. Hont, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

Economic Globalisation

Let me begin by looking at how the internationalisation of economic activity affects the coherence and viability of the nation-state. The development of the field of international political economy (IPE) has done much to point out that exclusive focus on the nation-state as a unit of analysis can be inadequate in understanding the dimensions of economic activity in the modern world. Some approaches within IPE, such as Interdependence, Regime and Hegemonic Stability Theories continue to be state-centric. But that is not the case with a number of other approaches. Marxist approaches in particular have been divided over the question of the role of the state.³³ This division has been over the question of the extent to which the supranational character of the capitalist mode of production constrains all modern state structures versus the extent to which the state plays a direct role in promoting the internationalisation of capital.³⁴ Exemplifying the former perspective, Wallerstein's World Systems Theory was based on the ontological primacy of the world capitalist system, based on a single division of labour between the core, peripheral and semi-peripheral regions of the world. Even though Wallerstein recognised the significance of nation-states in the modern world, in his analysis the imperatives of market exchange at the international level curtailed state autonomy so much so that nation-states were but superstructural appendages aiding in the reproduction of the modern global capitalist system.³⁵ But other scholars who have looked at the internationalisation of capital have stressed how the state continues to play a role in the reproduction of capitalism. Robin Murray has pointed out that as capital extends beyond its national borders, the historical link that bound it to its particular domestic state no longer *necessarily* holds. But the domestic state is not territorially limited in its activities, and it might well "follow" its capital and perform the critical "economic roles" that it has always played in the reproduction of capitalism.³⁶

33. Much of Marxist analysis has been critiqued for its inadequate theorisation of the state. This is a critique easily applied to the "capital logics school" as represented, for example, in the work of Ernest Mandel. See Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, Joris De Bres (trans.) (London: NLB, 1972). The "Miliband-Poulantzas debate" on the degree of state autonomy in capitalist society dealt more directly with the question of the role of the state, but assumed that the state always acted to promote the legitimacy of capitalist society. See Nicos Poulantzas, "The Problem of the Capitalist State", *New Left Review*, Vol. 58 (1960), pp. 67-78; and Ralph Miliband, "The Capitalist State: Reply to Nicos Poulantzas", *New Left Review*, Vol. 59 (1970), pp. 53-60.

34. See Andrew Linklater, *Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990). (See especially chs. 6 and 7, "The States-system and the World System" and "Class and State in International Relations".)

35. Hence his reservations about socialist states, that in participating in international trade and commerce, remained a part of, and abettor in, the continuation of the world capitalist system. Wallerstein seriously doubted the ability of states to act as anti-systemic forces. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); and Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Politics of the World Economy: The States, the Movements and the Civilizations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Among the historical sociologists whose work (especially on the state) has influenced scholars of international relations, Stephen Hobden finds Wallerstein unique in not being state-centric in his account of the international system. Stephen Hobden, "Theorizing the International System: Perspectives from Historical Sociology", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25 (1999), pp. 257-271.

36. Robin Murray, "The Internationalization of Capital and the Nation-state", *New Left Review*, Vol. 67 (1971), pp. 84-109.

This debate on the “internationalisation of the state” has been renewed in the literature on economic globalisation. Writers are increasingly pointing out how the gradual shift from multinational corporations towards more transnational corporations or from the internationalisation of economic activity (as economic activity spreads across state borders) towards the globalisation of economic activity (which involves a more functional integration of economic activity spread globally) also limits state capacity to control and influence domestic national economies and thus weakens state authority over its national space.³⁷ This is what Mittelman has called “the spatial reorganization of production, the interpenetration of industries across borders [and] the spread of financial markets”.³⁸ The spatial reorganisation of production has been accompanied by changes in the international division of labour, which has included among other changes the feminisation of certain kinds of labour. The globalisation of international finance has led to the enormous flow of capital and currencies with increasing rapidity, huge growth of global currency speculation, derivatives trading and currency instability, and has increasingly curtailed the ability of the state to control monetary and fiscal policy.³⁹ In general, it has been argued that in the face of economic globalisation, state autonomy is considerably reduced, as the state becomes simply a facilitator of globalisation.⁴⁰ Susan Strange, who had long argued that the emergence of the modern state system is inseparable from the evolution of the capitalist market, has argued more recently that the Asian financial crisis and growing socio-economic inequalities around the world makes the contemporary state system, or what she provocatively names “the Westfailure system”, largely defunct as a functional

37. See Drucker, *op. cit.*; and Peter Dicken, *Global Shift: The Internationalization of Economic Activity*, 2nd edn (New York: Guilford Press, 1992). This is the distinction sometimes made between the international economy (movements of trade, investments, payments that are regulated by the state) and the world/global economy (cross-boundary unregulated movements of production and finance). It is significant of course, that globalisation of free markets in this form “frees” capital, but not labour, from state regulation.

38. James H. Mittelman, “The Dynamics of Globalization”, in James H. Mittelman (ed.), *Globalization: Critical Reflections* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), p. 2.

39. For arguments on how the globalisation of finance and production threatens the future of the nation-state, see R. O’Brien, *Global Financial Integration: The End of Geography* (London: Sage, 1990); Dick Bryan, *The Chase across the Globe: International Accumulation and the Contradictions for Nation States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995); V. Schmidt, “The New World Order, Incorporated: The Rise of Business and the Decline of the Nation-state”, *Daedalus*, Vol. 124, No. 2 (1995), pp. 75–106.

40. See Mittelman, *op. cit.*; and Robert Cox, “A Perspective on Globalization”, in James H. Mittelman (ed.), *Globalization: Critical Reflections* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996). For Cox, who explicitly ties globalisation to world capitalism, globalisation entails the post-Fordist restructuring of production that followed the crisis of the mid-1970s based on a decentralized system of flexible production that is accompanied by deregulation, privatisation, social policy cut-backs, emphasis on international competitiveness, etc., and that undid the post-World War II constellation of forces. Cox also highlights the importance of “globalization as ideology”—the “there is no alternative” or TINA factor that represents globalisation as inevitable and necessary, so that the role of states is reduced to ensuring the working out of this market logic. In Cox’s analysis, the “internationalization of the state” means that states become “transmission belts” from the global to the national economies, adjusting the domestic economy to the exigencies of the global economy. See also Robert Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) for a discussion of how specific historical forms of state structures have been shaped by, and have in turn shaped, changing production relations.

governance authority, and challenges international relations scholars to imagine alternatives.⁴¹

In particular, it is the weakening of the welfare state occurring in the wake of the globalisation of economic liberalisation that is seen to limit state competence and authority all over the world. If the origins of the state had been in the provision of security,⁴² the growth of the “welfare state” in post-World War II industrial societies has now been well documented. But the decreasing appeal of Keynesian macroeconomic management in post-industrial societies (and the shift to supply-side economics) and the accompanied cut-back in public provision of social services threatens the legitimacy of the state as it increasingly finds itself with little control over the economy (as jobs, investment migrate) and unable to meet the expectations of the people for securing their prosperity. In post-colonial societies, the disintegration of the “developmentalist state” with the increasing adoption of IMF- and World Bank-sponsored market liberalisation, is also a potential threat to state legitimacy as the state is unable to deliver on promises of basic needs provisions, as the vehicle for social justice and equality and as the symbol of national resistance to external (neoliberalist) pressures.

In many ways, this sense of the declining “political efficacy” of the contemporary state is not entirely unfounded. Even if the state cannot, and perhaps never could, totally or effectively control economic activity within its borders,⁴³ its ability to regulate such activity to an extent and its willingness to undertake redistributive measures that tempered some of the more socially malignant effects of the market brought it a certain amount of legitimacy and approval from large sections of the population. This articulation of the nation-state, not simply as a provider of order and security, but as a provider of social (and economic) needs (as in education, health care, nutrition, housing as well as in ensuring a certain level of employment, minimum wages, price stability, etc.) has been an important and significant development of the second half of the 20th century. Even if there is increasing consensus in policy-making circles around the world of the efficiency of market forces and the need for market liberalisation and cut-backs in state activity in the economic realm, the expectations of the population from the state tend to be more complex. Even where many sections of the population might be dissatisfied with the functioning of existing states, the initial impact of market reforms on large sections of the population can be quite adverse and severe. This is evidenced, for instance, in the cut-back of social welfare programmes in advanced industrial societies on

41. Susan Strange, “The Westfailure system”, in *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25 (1999), pp. 345–354. See also Susan Strange, *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Susan Strange, *Mad Money: When Markets Outgrow Governments* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998). Another area which challenges state capacity (and hence legitimacy), and which Strange also points to, is in the area of environmental degradation. Increasing awareness of the urgency and severity of environmental problems and the realisation that environmental problems (like economics) do not respect national boundaries have forced states to institute co-operative arrangements to regulate state practices. The competence and legitimacy of contemporary states depends somewhat on the extent to which it can meet the ecological dangers to its population (dangers whose source might be outside state boundaries).

42. See Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime”, in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (eds.), *Bringing the State Back in* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

43. John Dunn (ed.), *The Economic Limits to Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

minority groups and women, as also in the adoption of IMF-imposed structural adjustments programmes on poor people and especially women in the lower economic classes in the developing world. The internationalisation and globalisation of economic activity, combined with the global spread of economic liberalisation can in that sense certainly weaken the ability of the state to meet the expectations of sections of the population, and possibly create new kinds of "legitimacy crises".⁴⁴

This is not simply a practical problem for particular states, which of course it is. John Dunn points out that while the immediate appeal of the nation derives much more from the subjective force of being born in a particular set of social relations, the appeal of the state lies in its *efficacy or competence*, which is much more objective.⁴⁵ To the extent that the idea of the modern nation-state is so closely linked to the idea of the welfare state or the developmentalist state, the efficacy of the contemporary state depends on the ability of the state to deliver on "welfare" or "development". To that extent, the decreased competency of the state to deliver on those promises could create the kinds of legitimacy crises that might call into question the durability of the nation-state. Perhaps, over time, expectations of what the state can or should do will change. Decline of a *particular* form of the modern state does not indicate the end of the nation-state form. As David Armstrong argues, since states are "social actors" and indeed become states through "international socialization", new conceptualisations of the state's role in the national economy that emerge as a consequence of globalisation may become "statefied" as states reach "intersubjective understandings of how to restructure themselves and how to strengthen the institutions of international society to accommodate globalization".⁴⁶ Nation-state legitimacy will depend on the extent on which "consent" coheres around new constructions of "national/state identity" more in tune with the new roles of the state.

To some extent, states that have recognised the impossibility of enjoying political autonomy over economic issues have increasingly turned to non-state entities for performing these functions more effectively. For instance, Alan Milward has argued that post-war European integration, in particular the launch of monetary union, was an attempt by many European nation-states to increase the capacity of the state to meet the expectations of its citizens, and in doing so to "rescue the nation-state" from its demise.⁴⁷ Transfer of political authority over monetary decision making to a supranational entity, hence losing fiscal and monetary sovereignty, was perhaps the only way for states to ensure a certain amount of economic stability in many of the states racked by huge currency fluctuations. In this somewhat unorthodox analysis, the creation of supranational entities like the European Union could paradoxically make the nation-state stronger rather than weaker. Of course, whether this will indeed be the result of

44. One recent piece of evidence for this is the proliferation of vocal, visible and fairly well organised anti-globalisation protests around the world.

45. John Dunn, "Introduction: Crisis of the Nation State?", *Political Studies*, Vol. 42, Special Issue (1994), pp. 3–15.

46. David Armstrong, "Globalization and the Social State", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 24 (1998), pp. 461–478, p. 477.

47. Alan Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-state* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

the European Union remains to be seen. Helen Thompson points out that even though in themselves monetary integration and the nation-state are not incompatible, the way the single currency projects have developed in practice since 1989 once again casts questions over the future of the nation-state in Europe. Fiscal austerity imposed by strong economic powers like Germany has made it difficult for many other European states to meet the economic expectations shaped by the fiscal promises of the post-war prosperity years, thus threatening the political legitimacy of those states.⁴⁸

But even those scholars who point to the limitations on state autonomy in the context of the diffusion of TINA ("there is no alternative") expectations don't discount the role that the state continues to play in aiding globalisation. For Cox, even if the state power of "shielding domestic economies from negative effects of globalization has diminished", states and intergovernmental organisations continue to play the role of "enforcing the rules of the global economy and in enhancing national competitiveness".⁴⁹ Mittelman points to the contradictory pressures on late industrialisers both to integrate into the international economy and intervene in the domestic economy to create a competitive edge. The question he says is "not whether the state should intervene in the economy but what type of state and what interventions are most appropriate in a specific context? And policy initiatives in whose interest?"⁵⁰ Leo Panitch takes a noticeably stronger stand on the issue by emphasising the extent to which contemporary globalisation is "authored" by states, so that "[f]ar from witnessing a bypassing of the state by a global capitalism, we see very active states and highly politicized sets of capitalist classes working to secure ... the global and domestic rights of capital".⁵¹ Panitch argues that even in the face of ideological consensus on globalisation, states participate in "constitutionalizing neoliberalism" through interstate treaties (like NAFTA) that are "designed to legally enforce upon future governments general adherence to the discipline of the capital market".⁵² Panitch is adamant that the globalising pressures even on advanced industrial states has led to a reorganisation of the structural power relations within states and has changed the nature of state intervention, but *has not* diminished the role of the state.

But even if the role of the state can be reduced to being the "agent" of globalisation, the state remains important for a number of other reasons. Despite the rise of various forms of terrorism, including "state terrorism", the state retains significant monopoly on the use of legitimate violence. The state continues to have monopoly on taxation, is still seen as the ultimate arbiter of social conflict, is expected to provide "security" from external threats, and to perform a variety of other functions. Perhaps most importantly, in the face of globalisa-

48. Helen Thompson, "The Nation-state and International Capital in Historical Perspective", *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1997), pp. 84–113. See especially pp. 108–113. How the European monetary union will affect the political legitimacy of the weaker economic actors within the union remains to be seen.

49. Robert Cox, "A Perspective on Globalization", in James H. Mittelman (ed.), *Globalization: Critical Reflections* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), pp. 26–27.

50. Mittelman, *op. cit.*, pp. 16–17.

51. Leo Panitch, "Rethinking the Role of the State", in James H. Mittelman (ed.), *Globalization: Critical Reflections* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996), p. 85.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

tion, the state continues to be seen as the site for many to seek protection from some of the effects of global corporate capitalism. As Panitch points out, “[n]ot only is the world still very much composed of states, but insofar as there is any effective democracy at all in relation to the power of capitalists and bureaucrats it is still embedded in political structures that are national or subnational in scope”.⁵³ The exercise of democratic control over capital takes on an even greater urgency for Southern countries increasingly subject to IMF pressures, where the state is sometimes the only refuge against neoimperialism.⁵⁴

The point is that even though state legitimacy is potentially threatened by economic globalisation, much depends on how state roles are reconfigured in the face of globalisation. Even if the economic limits to national politics is not a new problem for state legitimacy, the qualitative shift in economic globalisation in late 20th-century capitalism, as well as the development of the nature of the contemporary state, does change somewhat the implications for state legitimacy. In itself, the dispersal of some of the functions of state to other non-state entities, whether supranational or subnational (micro-management rather than macro-management by the state), does not threaten state legitimacy, but can in fact strengthen it. Economic globalisation certainly entails different state roles, changing expectations from the people, and new measures of state competency, but does not necessarily threaten the existence of the nation-state.

Cultural Globalisation

There is also a cultural dimension to globalisation that has implications for the nation-state and its future. This has more to do with issues of identity. Roland Robertson defines globalisation as both “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole”.⁵⁵ While the process of this compression might have been occurring over a very long time, the recent growth of communications technology (cheap and fast air travel, telephonic and telegraphic services, satellite media transmissions, the Internet and cyberspace) has both accelerated and deepened this process. This is a process that, many argue, both brings the world together and splits the world apart simultaneously. As Stuart Hall points out, globalisation at the cultural level has led to *both* the universalisation *and* the fragmentation and multiplication of identities.⁵⁶ Robertson talks of how globalisation leads to the simultaneity of “the particularization of universalism (the rendering of the world as a single place) and the universalization of particularism (the globalized expectation that societies ... should have distinct identities)”.⁵⁷ In his more recent work, Robertson has offered the concept of “glocalization” to emphasise the *simultaneity* of the homogenising

53. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

54. To what extent the state can be an effective site of resistance against globalisation is a research question that can only be answered by exploring the particular structures, social forces and relations that compose the state in any particular socio-historic situation.

55. Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1992), p. 8.

56. Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990).

57. Roland Robertson as quoted in Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (London: Sage, 1994), p. 28.

and heterogenising thrusts of globalisation in the late 20th-century world.⁵⁸ Keeping in mind that these two processes are simultaneous, let us look at their different implications for nation-states.

Let us begin with the homogenisation thrusts of globalisation. In one sense, the universalisation of the appeal of the nation-state as an ideal cultural-political form of collective identity is itself a product of globalisation. The now globalised expectation that nations exist and deserve their states is fairly well accepted and forms the normative foundation for most contemporary international organisations. In addition, these international organisations have served to institutionalise the *form* of the nation-state, and impose a certain amount of uniformity in the nation-state system. John Meyer has shown how globalisation in this sense serves to strengthen the nation-state. Meyer points out that despite the vast economic inequalities among states, there is a world culture that creates significant isomorphisms among nation-states and helps keep this decentralised world polity together. The global system of nation-states is based on global norms that define external and internal sovereignty, and is instantiated and reproduced through the similarity of the goals of “equality” and “progress” pursued by all nation-states. In other words, world-level cultural and organisational directives for development and progress have resulted in nation-state uniformity as all states follow similar objectives, policies and programmes. Meyer develops this argument through a study of the national educational systems in the post-World War II era.⁵⁹ Connie McNeely elaborates on this concept of world culture by showing how international organisations like the UN set normative and prescriptive standards of behaviour for state practices (increasingly conformed to by nation-states around the world), and in doing so play a role in institutionalising the nation-state system. She specifically shows how the nation-state system has been standardised and reproduced through the invention and spread of national income statistics, resulting from the efforts of UN statisticians and from the UN collection and dissemination of comparative tables.⁶⁰ At least in this sense, the homogenisation thrust of globalisation reproduces and sustains the nation-state system, rather than threatens its existence.

But what of the globalisation of identities, in particular through the homogenising imperatives of global consumer capitalism? Benjamin Barber describes the homogenising drives of “McWorld” (or what has also been called the “MacDonaldization” of the world) which has created a “commercialized” and “depoliticized” world.⁶¹ Kenichi Ohmae describes a consumerist world in which brand loyalty supplants national loyalty.⁶² Can this world that is homogenised by the globalisation of consumption erase the divisiveness of national allegiances? It is questionable whether corporate icons can provide the kind of collective solidarity that national identities provide, and this is perhaps one reason for the

58. Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity”, in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* (London: Sage, 1995), pp. 25–44.

59. I draw this discussion of Meyer’s work from Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization* (London: Sage, 1994), pp. 21–26.

60. Connie L. McNeely, *Constructing the Nation-state* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995).

61. Benjamin R. Barber, “Jihad Vs. McWorld”, *The Atlantic Monthly* (March 1992), pp. 53–63.

62. Kenichi Ohmae, *The Borderless World* (London: Harper Business, 1990).

“global localisation” that Ohmae points to, in which product marketing adapts to local (often interpreted as national) conditions, or what has come to be known as “micro-marketing”.⁶³ But it is these depoliticised identities that also create the impetus to “resecure parochial identities” so as to “escape McWorld’s dully insistent imperatives”, or what Barber calls the “Jihads” that lead to the “Lebanonization of the world”.⁶⁴

In other words, the consumerist homogenisation of the world pulls in many directions, and creates sometimes overlapping and sometimes contradictory identities and interests. Transnational, global identities defined through the commercialised symbols of “Nike” or more syncretic symbols as in “World Beat music”, co-exist with nationalist searches for particularistic identities and new imaginings of “tradition” and “history”. While the imperatives of economic globalisation force nation-states to remain open to these forces of global homogenisation, nationalist assertions of identity call for certain kinds of cultural closure.⁶⁵ Ultimately, the future of nation-states depends on how they balance these conflicting demands on national identity.⁶⁶

Let us turn now to the heterogenising thrusts of globalisation, or what Robertson describes as the “universalization of particularism”. We live in a world, Robertson claims, in which not only has the “expectation of uniqueness” become institutionalised and globally widespread, but the local and the particular itself is produced on the basis of global norms.⁶⁷ In other words, globalisation of cultural

63. Writers on cultural globalisation are increasingly pointing out the problems with conceptualising this process simply as “Westernisation” or “Americanisation”, not simply because it fails to take account of the way in which global marketing strategies are increasingly “indigenised”, but also because it negates the agency of other (particularly developing world) societies in shaping the contemporary world. See John Tomlinson for an excellent study of the agency of local audiences in receiving and interpreting Western media messages. John Tomlinson, *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991). See Stuart Hall, *op. cit.*, for a discussion of how the emerging global culture is “syncretic” or “hybrid”.

64. Barber, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–58.

65. Arjun Appadurai points out that even though “Americanisation” is never quite that simple, from a “local” perspective it might sometimes be perceived as less of a threat than the cultural homogenisation imposed by a dominant ethnic/racial group closer at hand (e.g. Russianisation for the people of Soviet Armenia). But sometimes these fears of external homogenisation can also be exploited by such dominant groups to maintain their own hegemony. See Arjun Appadurai, *op. cit.*

66. But there are other ways in which globalisation creates a unifying force that crosses nation-state boundaries. Ronnie Lipschutz describes the emergence of a “Global Civil Society”, which is “self-conscious constructions of networks of knowledge and action, by decentred local actors, that cross the reified boundaries of space as though they were not there”. Ronnie D. Lipschutz, “Reconstructing World Politics: The Emergence of Global Civil Society”, *Millennium*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1992), pp. 389–420, p. 390. These are networks that span a variety of issue areas and involve many different kinds of actors (formed, for instance, with respect to environmental issues, human rights issues, etc.) and are at least partially the result of a “norm-governed global system rooted in the global capitalist consumer culture” (p. 402). Movements and networks within this global civil society may or not be anti-state, but it is important for the nation-state if the emergence of this global civil society points to the growth of what Lipschutz calls “global consciousness”. By itself, the emergence of forms of global identity and consciousness does not threaten the nation-state, but it can certainly challenge the particularisms of nationalist allegiances, and does problematize the primacy of the nation-state in world politics. See Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Border: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998) for an account of the rise of transnational non-governmental networks on human rights, environmental issues and violence against women.

67. Robertson, *Glocalization*, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

norms has produced not just the legitimacy of the idea of the nation-state, but also the expectation that such nation-states should embody unique and distinct identities. This once again represents the globalisation of the nationalist idea, the idea that nation-states are legitimate because the nation is a unique, authentic cultural entity, with its singular and distinct identity. Beyer, in describing Robertson's work, calls this the "relativization of particularisms", which leads to a search for particularistic identities.⁶⁸ The globalisation of this idea creates the potential for assertions of national identity, and can ultimately create the impetus for fragmentation of existing nation-states that are somehow seen as "inauthentic" and hence illegitimate. To the extent that such differentiation (or assertions of cultural particularisms) also occurs as a response to certain homogenising drives of globalisation ("jihad" as a response to "McWorld"), this also represents a success of the nationalist idea. Assertions of collective identity both as an element of, as well as in response to, globalisation is then more "nation-producing" than "nation-destroying". This certainly is an effect of globalisation that, in keeping with the argument of the last section on fragmentation, is not a threat to the nation-state but a measure of its success.

Conclusion: The Future of the Nation-state

What, then, can we say about the future of the nation-state? There are no doubt a number of threats to the coherence and durability of particular existing nation-states, but does that weaken the nation-state as a historical form, as a contemporary organising principle for collective cultural and political identity? Certainly, the severe crisis of particular nation-states, such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Rwanda and Somalia, can generate a sense of apprehension about the future of the nation-state itself. Yet this sense of crisis has not permeated across the globe and most existing nation-states remain relatively stable and viable despite the existence of various ethno-nationalist movements within them. Clearly this continuance of the nation-state form is neither natural nor inevitable, and immense material and ideational resources continue to be deployed—both domestically and inter-nationally—to maintain existing nation-states and the nation-state system.⁶⁹ The reproduction of the nation-state and the nation-state system is a complex process that requires active and constant political labour. The success of the nationalist project lies in erasing the politics of nation building, in making it appear as though the nation is a pre- or non-political entity, with

68. Beyer, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

69. Nation-states are never completely stable entities or finished products. Recent literature within critical international relations has attempted to show how the production and reproduction of national boundaries is an ongoing, continuous and always incomplete project of the state. See John Macmillan and Andrew Linklater (eds.), *Boundaries in Question: New Directions in International Relations* (London: Pinter, 1995); Michael Shapiro and Hayward Alker (eds.), *Challenging Boundaries* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995) for collections of articles on the production of, and challenges to, national boundaries. See David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) for an excellent discussion of how foreign policy is a form of statecraft that serves to produce and reproduce national boundaries. Critical studies that have examined sovereignty as an institution *and* practice have shown how *international* relations itself reproduces the nation-state, rather than pre-given nation-states simply partaking in international relations. See, for instance, Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (eds.), *State Sovereignty as Social Construct* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

its singular origin and destiny, and the state its legitimate political voice. Theories of the social world that take the centrality of the nation-state as a primordial given, and international relations about the interactions between these natural, pre-political communities cannot account for such *politics* of nation-state making.

In much of his work, Rob Walker has interrogated the statist colonisation of questions of the “political”, evidenced not just in discourses of the state (through which state legitimacy is established) or in the discipline of international relations that becomes a discourse of limits (or “the outside”), but in political and social analysis more generally.⁷⁰ Hence, the nation-state as a historically specific and contingent resolution of a series of modernist dichotomies—universal/particular, homogeneity/heterogeneity, global/local—becomes the taken-for-granted, often implicit “container of politics”. In the field of international relations at its most pessimistic, taming the “outside” becomes an apolitical issue, a question of strategy as in neorealism and much of foreign policy analysis. At its most optimistic, politics (conceptualised via the “domestic”) can perhaps (through inter-national relations) be “extended”, and hence always precariously, to the “outside” as in many neoliberal accounts. Either way, it becomes impossible to imagine, as Walker has pointed out, a *world* politics, that is both more than and less than relations among nation-states. I believe that it is this impoverishment of the political imagination that is evidenced in anxieties relating to “the end of the nation-state”, and explains the inordinate amount of attention it has generated in scholarly and popular writing.

But even if it were the case that the problem of nation building became more acute across the globe as existing nation-states failed to accommodate ethno-nationalist demands within the institutional structures of the existing state, would it create a crisis of the nation-state as a historical political form? The sense of crisis, as John Dunn points out, comes “less from a weakening in the appeal of the idea of the nation than from a lessening in the cogency (normative or practical) of the idea of the state”.⁷¹ Fragmentation of existing nation-states on the basis of collective assertions to subnationalist identity represents, as I argued above, the success of the ideal of the nation-state. But what, then, about the efficacy and competence of the state as a particular form of political authority structure? Globalisation, both economic and cultural, does affect the ability of the state to shape society and the economy. But globalisation is a complex process, and its effects do not simply impair the state. There are, as we saw above, elements of globalisation that actually strengthen the nation-state system. But there are also forces that can weaken the legitimacy of the state. The question is, how is state-building reworked in the light of these forces?⁷² Building legitimacy in the state is important for the continuation of the state, and it is

70. See R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); and R.B.J. Walker, “From International Relations to World Politics”, in Joseph A. Camilleri, Anthony P. Jarvis and Albert J. Paolini (eds.), *The State in Transition: Reimagining Political Space* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

71. John Dunn, *Crisis, op. cit.*, p. 9.

72. Istvan Hont points out that “the theory of ‘state-building’, as a guide for understanding the ‘nation-state’ is first and foremost an application of the theory of the state itself. It handles the ‘nation’ prefixed to the dyad ‘nation-state’, or ‘national state’, not as a genuinely constitutive agency, but as an important supporting actor playing out a specific role in consummating the teleology of ‘state-building’” (Hont, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–179).

important to explore the ways in which states that find their autonomy threatened, deal with the situation. Relegating some kinds of authority to supranational entities, or devolving power downwards through decentralisation are ways of coping with these changes, and can help retain state legitimacy rather than threaten it. Creating new discourses of the nation-state, that articulate it to different functions, and help create new expectations, could also aid in the same process. There have always been, and will be, a variety of different authority structures in the world. The future of the nation-state depends on the extent to which existing nation-states are reconfigured via their interactions with those structures. The question, I believe, is not so much whether the nation-state will exist, but what “national identity” and “state identity” mean in the face of globalisation and fragmentation. What this requires are careful, contextual, socio-historical studies of how existing nation-states are being reconstructed and reworked to remain salient and viable among other forms of socio-spatial organisations and communities.

How could the nation-state cease to exist? While the downward devolution of nation-states through fragmentation does not necessarily lead to the demise of the nation-state, the leaking of sovereignty upwards towards supranational entities could logically end in the demise of the nation-state. Existing supranational entities such as the European Union or international organisations like the United Nations do not necessarily threaten the nation-state system, and can in fact strengthen it—as we saw above. But if the process continues in such a way that eventually a “world state” emerges, this would surely mean the end of the nation-state. But nobody seriously foresees this as a possibility for the near future. If the kinds of property relations that have defined the territorial claims of modern nation-states, as John Ruggie has shown, are replaced by a different set of social relations, this would perhaps entail another transformation in the world polity, and nation-states might cease to exist. Yet this also does not seem to be happening. What is being noticed in accounts of the end of the nation-state are the existence and increased salience of other forms of community and structures of political authority, or what mainstream accounts within international relations that remain normed to the primacy of the nation-state call “non-state actors”.

But societies, as Mann points out, have never been unitary, but instead have always, in prehistoric times as well as today, been composed of “a multiplicity of networks of interaction, many with differing, if overlapping and intersecting, boundaries”.⁷³ Different socio-spatial levels of social interaction (local/sub-national, national, inter-national/geopolitical, transnational and global) continue to co-exist (even if the salience of some becomes more important at certain times⁷⁴), so that it never makes sense to say that we live in a world composed *essentially* of nation-states, or one characterised essentially by transnationalism and globalism. Meaningful human interaction occurs at, through and across all levels. According to Mann, we live in a world in which the linkages between

73. M. Mann, “Neither Nation-state nor Globalism”, *Environment and Planning*, Vol. 28, No. 11 (1996), pp. 1960–1964.

74. And how any particular actor or agency comes to be salient needs to be historicized, as does Hendrik Spruyt for the nation-state. See Hendrick Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and its Competitors* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

the global, transnational, national and subnational are becoming more complex, but these are not changes that are “squeezing the nation-state out”.⁷⁵

The privileging of the nation-state in the discipline of international relations also inhibits analyses that examine “degrees of statehood”,⁷⁶ or “the overlapping political authorities in a single territory but at distinct scales”⁷⁷—which are much more useful in capturing the dynamics of power in the contemporary global system than an ontology premised on the possession of statehood (either you have it or you don’t) that underlies the anxieties surrounding “failed states”, “collapsed states” or the “end of the nation-state”. Perhaps part of the problem is in the spatial imagery implicit in a “levels of analysis” kind of formulation. David Campbell points out that in much of international relations scholarship, “any complexity surrounding the issue of actors and agency is represented by additional levels of analysis—such as the supplementing of national and international with local and global ... complexity is always anchored in a ‘something-national’ formulation, whether it be ‘international,’ ‘multinational,’ or ‘transnational’”.⁷⁸ Further, space within international relations has been understood in primarily geopolitical terms. But territorialism is one particular expression of spatial authority. Spatial authority, as radical geographers have shown, is not simply about the division and control of physical territory. Space can be divided by time, class, race, gender or other social categories. Or, in other words, what is important is the social composition of space, as also the spatiality of social categories. “The state”, as Julian Saurin points out, “is one amongst a multitude of competing principles for social organization.”⁷⁹ A spatial levels of analysis formulation fails to be able to account for the variety and interacting ways that values and meanings are created in the world through the interaction of diverse systems of meanings, as well as understand the dynamics of a changing world. Hence “new issues” such as economics, environment, gender, religion are just added on to extant state-centric accounts of the world, and the question becomes one of the “survivability” of the nation-state given these changes.

There is a sense, then, in which the anxieties surrounding the end of the nation-state are politically conservative both in their formulation and their effects—taking for granted state discourse about itself (and one that serves very specific interests), and hence reproducing as central one particular, and in so

75. Mann, *op. cit.*, p. 1963.

76. This is an argument that has especially been made with respect to states in Africa, where many nation-states that are recognized as such through the norms of sovereignty often fail to exercise “effective statehood”, domestically or internationally, and many other groups, such as guerrilla insurgents or non-governmental organisations or groups might take on state-like characteristics. See Christopher Clapham, “Degrees of Statehood”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 24 (1998), pp. 143–157. See also Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

77. Darel E. Paul, “Sovereignty, Survival and the Westphalian Blind Alley in International Relations”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25 (1999), pp. 217–231, p. 217.

78. David Campbell, “Political Prosaics, Transversal Politics, and the Anarchical World”, in Michael Shapiro and Hayward Alker (eds.), *Challenging Boundaries* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 11.

79. Julian Saurin, “The End of International Relations? The State and International Theory in the Age of Globalization”, in John Macmillan and Andrew Linklater (eds.), *Boundaries in Question: New Directions in International Relations* (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 255–256.

many ways deeply suspect, form of political community. Ultimately, to pose the question in terms of the endist teleologies that have become fashionable in this triumphalist post-Cold War moment is to ask for impossible theoretical answers to historical questions, as this paper has tried to show. But perhaps in this questioning about the future of the nation-state there are new epistemic spaces created that make it possible to raise the kinds of questions that were not possible when another kind of endist narrative had foreclosed the politics of nation-state making—questions about the status of human rights, the possibilities of the good life and political community, the varieties and forms of power, the creation of intercivilisational dialogues, the accommodation of cultural differences, alternative modes of democratic governance—without reducing them to the statist configurations of the political. It is in these spaces that lie new and exciting research agendas for scholars of world politics.