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International Political Science Review 2004 25: 251

DOI: 10.1177/0192512104043014

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The Lasting Marriage Between Nation and State Despite Globalization

ELISA P. REIS

ABSTRACT. The merger of authority and solidarity that the nation-state accomplished for about 200 years is now threatened by the winds of globalization. As a consequence, the author emphasizes the ways in which the state interacts with both market and civil society are changing significantly. New developments such as the private provision of law and order, the adoption of managerial principles and values in state administration, and the spread of corporate social responsibility ideologies into the universe of firms, all discussed in subsequent articles, make it clear that the very idea of market and authority as contrasting principles of social organization is now being called into question.

Keywords: • Authority • Globalization • Nation-state • Solidarity

The topic “The Nation-State and Globalization: Changing Roles and Functions” opens the door to many possible approaches and modes of investigation. This diversity is well illustrated in the articles included here, which examine the question from quite distinct angles. The idea behind the organization of the issue was to discuss the challenges confronting nation-states today. While the concept of the “nation-state” has been a household word to social scientists since the early days of modern social science, lately we have been concerned about the consequences of recent transformations in the patterns of interaction of nation-states with both the market and society. Of course, nation-states have always been undergoing constant construction and transformation. However, the depth and magnitude of the processes of change now under way are such that it is difficult even for social scientists (presumably, the people best placed to comprehend the significance of the changes in progress) to make sense of what is occurring.

For this special issue of *International Political Science Review*, we have asked for contributions from a small group of political scientists who have dedicated themselves to examining these kinds of changes. We considered asking them to

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focus on a single area of concern or to try to achieve a general balance of approaches, but in the end we decided that, in these times of uncertainty and revision of paradigms, it would be more appropriate to let parallel ideas circulate and take diversity itself as an indication that we are searching for new certainties, however provisional the latter may prove to be in the social sciences.

So, instead of providing a general scheme for individual authors to examine, we started out with a minimalist statement on the current state of perplexity and let our authors choose how to approach the subject. This strategy seems to work better because the multiple processes that are encompassed within the expression "globalization" are so disparate and complex that it is well-nigh impossible to explore all the angles from which new challenges confront the particular arrangement between authority and solidarity that we call the nation-state.

Despite the complexity and scope of the subject, there is, nonetheless, a common concern that unites the authors included here: where is the nation-state going? Under the impact of global processes that make the world a single unit, on the one hand, and of a global trend toward decentralization and fragmentation, on the other, great transformations are taking place in the patterns of interaction between states and nations (Albrow, 1997; Robertson, 1992). Within political science, as well as other social sciences, we have all been conditioned to think of the nation-state as the natural concept for dealing with power, authority, and solidarity. However, this conventional way of looking at the nation-state as a genuine compound, integrating feelings of belonging (identity) and compulsory authority in a given territorial space that is deemed sovereign, no longer seems natural or inevitable. Some have gone so far as to announce the demise of the nation-state (Van Creveld, 1999). While this is clearly an exaggeration, it is undoubtedly clear that we no longer perceive the nation and the state as we did in the past. There are relevant changes that make it critical to discuss what is happening to the nation-state in both historical and theoretical terms, be it from an economic, political, or cultural standpoint. Consequently, it is crucial to take stock of the historical background and recall how nation-states were consolidated and how we learned to think of them in conceptual terms.

The amalgamation of nation and state that originally took place in western Europe and came to constitute the "normal" way of organizing society is among the most remarkable features of the historical process of modernization. Though nations and states are far older phenomena, it is only in the past two centuries that the fusion of the two came to acquire the status of being the normal way of relating the state and society (Grillo, 1980), a process that has meant that citizenship itself has come to be seen as the offspring of this marriage between authority and solidarity, and thereby consolidating a politicized social identity along territorial lines (Bendix, 1964; Reis, 1988, 1997).

Nation and state became so intertwined in modern culture that even Weber's rigorous conceptual definitions somehow mix the two together. In his words, "One might well define the concept of nation in the following way: a nation is a community of sentiment which normally tends to produce a state of its own" (Weber, 1946: 176). Some may see in Weber's conflation of the two concepts precisely the trademark of German nationalism. That is to say, imbued with a nationalist sentiment that made the German nation a sole, indivisible whole, he assumes that the nation tends to create the state. But even in France, the champion of universalism, we find similar developments. The famous definition of the nation by Marcel Mauss explicitly incorporates the state:

We understand by nation, a society integrated in material and moral terms, with a stable and permanent central power, fixed frontiers, and a relatively stable moral, mental and cultural unity among the inhabitants who consciously respect the state and abide by its laws. (1969: 584, my translation)

But perhaps the clearest indication of the cultural merger of state and nation that characterized the modern world is the fact that both lay people and social scientists assumed that the most immediate empirical reference of society was the space of the nation-state. It is only in recent decades that we can observe moves toward the denaturalization of the idea of a compound of solidarity and authority organized around nation-states. As a consequence of many global processes, some dating from much earlier times as well as some that are more recent, we can observe trends toward the articulation of both authority and solidarity on new bases. It is not that nationalism or statism, or both, are about to vanish. What is changing is the monopolist position of the nation-state as the organizer of identity and solidarity, on the one hand, and as the sole champion of sovereignty, on the other.

The signs of the above-mentioned changes are complex and difficult to summarize. The stage we have reached is effectively a turning point – the moment when we need to redefine our concepts because the conventional ones no longer fulfill their role in framing relevant research questions in order to reflect on contemporary society. Thus, for example, the concept of civil society, which lay dormant for a long period, was brought back into our lexicon in part because we felt the need to disentangle solidarity from state authority (Alexander, 1998; Keane, 1988; Kumar, 1992). Instead of referring to the nation as the standard-bearer of extended solidarity, quite often we hear statements about civil society as the appropriate space for community feelings, interests, and actions.

In all areas, conventional patterns of interaction between the state, society, and the market have faced multiple challenges. The proliferation of nongovernmental organizations involved with public tasks that were formerly the exclusive responsibility of the state is illustrative of new arrangements in the articulation between society and the state. Analysts now seek new ways to conceptualize solidarity initiatives, because neither market interests nor state authority seem adequate to deal with certain aspects of social life (Wolfe, 1989). For better or worse, we observe everywhere the emergence of a “Third Sector,” a new player that has arrived to share in tasks earlier conceived as either market or state based.

The terms of interaction between the market and authority have also experienced noticeable changes. Technological changes act to intensify networks and flows of information and other resources that ignore country borders, making it dramatically evident that capital has indeed no motherland or fatherland. As many have observed, with regards to the market, there seems to be less discontinuity, inasmuch as capital flows and transnational corporations have long crossed national borders. Nevertheless, a national basis played a key role in entrepreneurial calculations, be it to raise protective barriers, to extract public incentives, or to manipulate currency advantages. All such resources are still quite valuable to capital owners, but advances in communication and information technology have made it far easier for stockholders to move freely around the globe and for providers of certain goods and services, such as telecommunications, to put an end to state monopolies.

Furthermore, the very idea of the market and authority as contrasting

principles of social organization has come into question. The unquestioned state monopoly over legitimate means of violence no longer prevails as the private provision of law and order becomes official (Fitzgerald, 1988). State administrations all over the world are infused with beliefs and norms about managerial government, while firms increasingly profess corporate social responsibility. The discontinuity between these ideologies and former orienting principles is particularly noticeable among the former socialist countries and within the so-called third world. Changes have also been dramatic for the former second world, and for less industrialized countries accustomed to perceiving the state as an economic agent in its own right. Nations that had traditionally relied on state firms as the basis for sustained growth and development (Evans, 1979) have now found rapid erosion of economic statism accompanying the dramatic demise of state socialism. In both cases, the retreat of the state from the role of economic agent emphasized the need to re-elaborate ties of social solidarity on new terms.

It goes without saying that the expression "globalization" involves a far more complex reality than that conveyed by my comments above. A more accurate way to refer to the phenomena involved would be to refer to "global processes," taking into account that even these comprise contradictory implications. Several such processes are contemplated in the four articles that follow. In their diversity, they provide a good cross-section of the issues at stake and of the various research perspectives relevant to the subject. Variations aside, two of them make the importance of taking history into account to enlighten our analysis explicitly evident. Like the classic historical-sociological approaches that contributed to our understanding of the making of nation-states in western Europe (Bendix, 1964; Dyson, 1980; Moore, 1966; Tilly, 1975; Weber, 1976), the articles by Axtmann and Moore examine macro-historical processes to grasp the meaning of recent transformations in the way the state relates to society.

In "The State of the State: The Model of the Modern State and its Contemporary Transformation," Axtmann provides an account of the historical constitution of the nation-state in Europe and its consolidation as "the ideal of the well-ordered, western, modern political community." He offers a concise picture of a dynamic process, which took place over the course of the centuries, and points out that what was once a peculiar institutionalization of authority and solidarity, the modern European nation-state, came to constitute an ideal, and, in the 20th century, a model emulated at the global level.

Axtmann then discusses how the changes observed in recent decades bring into question the very cornerstones of the nation-state model. Exploring the logical implications of such changes the author provides the reader with a theoretical assessment of the transformation of the nation-state. His synthetic but encompassing review of the literature is, at the same time, an original account of what is happening to the nation-state.

Moore's major concern is how to make states in the third world more accountable to their domestic populations so as to enhance democracy and promote development. His explicit purpose is to find ways to expand opportunities for virtuous politics within such countries. At first glance, "Revenues, State Formation, and the Quality of Governance in Developing Countries" may sound less attuned to our subject, but this is just a superficial impression. The author looks at the bases of extraction of resources that states count on as possible explanations for the recurrence of bad governance in third-world countries. From a perspective he calls "fiscal sociology," Moore poses an intriguing question: if the

states in the South were more dependent on domestic taxpayers, would they be more responsible and responsive, thereby improving the quality of governance?

Historical analysis provides the author with the comparative resources necessary to pursue his question. He is aware that the historical perspective on resource extraction does not constitute a theory from which one could derive a set of related statements for connecting variables. Instead, he takes "fiscal sociology" to constitute a historical comparative approach to state-building processes. The great advantage of such an approach, in his view, is that it makes it possible to raise relevant questions that have been neglected. Moore then contrasts the western European experience to what takes place in the South, where states depend more on revenue from natural resources than on taxes.

What is less obvious in the article by Moore is that although he sees latecomer nation-states as severely affected by globalization, he still backs strategies for building nation-states in the South. Despite the growing pressures from global processes, it remains critical to create motives for citizens to control public authority. Comparative state formation suggests that, if fiscal requirements were the cue for democratic governance among the early modern states, there remains "a potential *governance dividend* through more intensive taxation" for developing countries.

The article by Bislev, entitled "Globalization, State Transformation, and Public Security," takes recent transformations in practices and ideologies relative to the provision of security and protection as the basis for examining what is happening to the classic division of work between the state and the market. He observes that private rationales have been brought into the state, thereby blurring the distinction between authority and market actions to a certain extent. The discourse and practices of New Public Management and the privatization of public functions are expressions of such trends. The provision of public services becomes infused with notions of customer satisfaction, flexibility, and similar notions that equate the citizen with the consumer of rights.

To illustrate his arguments, Bislev looks at the changes taking place in public security in Southern California. His empirical research in the San Diego area highlights two noticeable trends: the managerialization of police work and the growth of private security technologies. These two dimensions clearly signal a far less marked distinction between public and private, state and market, and citizen and consumer. Looking at the rapid growth of gated communities in California, Bislev calls attention to the fact that the privatization of middle-class security, justified in efficiency terms, ends up fostering closeness and exclusiveness. These status symbols, in turn, become tradable goods in the real-estate market.

Bislev's conclusion is that the governance of security in places such as San Diego point to a radical transformation of the nation-state. Although this does not mean that the modern state is about to vanish, it does suggest that democracy, equality, and other values that we have become accustomed to consider as the cherished ideals of the modern nation-state may be jeopardized.

Lastly, the article by Melo, "Institutional Choice and the Diffusion of Policy Paradigms," discusses to what extent the global processes at work act to homogenize institutional and policy innovation among latecomer states. He provides a general theoretical discussion and then focuses on pension reform in Brazil to illustrate his arguments. The implicit questions framing the discussion are several. Do nation-states imprint their own marks on the policy decision-making process? Are institutional innovations a matter of contextual choice or just

the diffusion of models imposed by external power-holders, epistemic communities, or equivalent global actors? Taking into account that state sovereignty is increasingly becoming a relative matter, that multilateral organizations have a strong say in internal issues, and that corporations are transnational, must we conclude that the convergence hypothesis is right? Is there room for innovation in policy design among less developed countries?

Melo sees the integration of rational choice approaches with path-dependency explanations as the most promising alternative to explain reform in a global world. In his view, we must combine the individualistic perspective, which contemplates choice and responsibility, with institutional history, which provides a clue to change sequences.

Despite the fact that these authors embrace different theoretical perspectives and look at distinctive issues, there are also commonalities worth mentioning. Thus, I would say that the importance of the macro-historical approach to a proper understanding of the dynamics of the nation-state emerges quite clearly from all the contributors. Although, as noted earlier, this is particularly clear in the case of the articles by Axtmann and Moore, even Melo, who defends the use of rational choice models, makes it clear that choices do not take place in a void and pushes for the incorporation of institutional history as a way to account for bounded rationality. The analysis provided here strongly remind us that the reality confronted by nation-states today should make us more aware of the intricate relations between history and theory, but they also suggest the urgency of a research agenda oriented toward a better understanding of the state's new tasks.

It is also quite obvious that the context of analysis somehow shapes to the lens of the observer. The articles by Moore and Melo, which deal with third-world countries, pay less attention to what is happening to the classic nation-state model, and are more concerned with the implication of global processes for the actual states at the bottom of the global system. In turn, Axtmann and Bislev are more oriented toward what is happening to the basic tenets of the modern state. Axtmann directly confronts the question of what is left of the nation-state and Bislev looks at challenges within the kernel of the state's definition, that is, the monopoly of legitimate violence. Variations apart, one common concern unifies the reflections and analyses here included, and one always worth recalling: how to preserve the basic values of democracy hitherto structurally dependent upon the nation-state.

To conclude this brief introduction, I would stress that the variety of issues tackled by the four articles included here clearly illustrates the vast field of investigation that has to be covered to assess the dynamic of nation-states in the globalized world. I trust that this insightful sample of research possibilities will constitute a relevant contribution to the formulation of a collective research agenda.

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