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Migration, Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism

The notion that the natural and optimal form of organising a society is the unity of the nation, territory and state became dominant in the second half of the 19th century. Consequently, it was evident, on the one hand, that where this unity had not yet been established, a given society had to aspire for it. It also naturally followed, on the other hand, that the nation-state became the focus of the emerging social and historical sciences. Under these terms, sociological and historical analyses viewed society as static. Migration, which has always been an integral part of human history, has been left out of their investigations, while somewhat later, the occurrence was treated as an extraordinary, exceptional phenomenon that needed to be explained in the studies of expert researchers. It was the case despite the fact that some of the biggest movements of peoples took place at this time, in the period of modern history ending with the First World War: when some 50 million people moved from Europe to North America, from China to South-East Asia, and from the European parts of Russia to Siberia respectively.

According to the nationalist – nation-state ideals, emigration is not desirable, in fact, it was considered a tragic act equal to treason and self-dissention. “*One who changes their homeland should also change heart*”, Mihály Tompa wrote in a poem to his friend who fled abroad after the tragic end of the Hungarian war of independence in 1849. Those who were forced to live in foreign lands were perceived to be heartbroken not only after their home but for their nation, people, to which they still belonged even whilst living in a strange country. It was the duty of the mother nation to still care about their material and spiritual well-being, while in return the emigrants were expected to help the mother nation’s cause. Through nationalistic movements and the accompanying education in the consolidated mother-tongue, the emigrant ethnic Chinese groups became members of the Chinese diaspora, the Gujarati emigrants belonged to the Indian nation, emigrate Sicilians became part of the Italian nation, while the emigrating people of Liptov belonged to the Slovakian diaspora. Governments of the established nation-states created consulates, the committed freedom fighters of nation-states that hadn’t yet been formed sent agitators (e.g. Indians, Chinese, Irish), while churches sent priests (e.g. the Italian and Irish Catholics) into the diaspora. This was the time when the future fathers

of the Chinese and Indian nations were active, Sun Yat-sen toured in Hawaii and California while Mohandas Gandhi worked in South Africa. Naturally, the Jewish, the “original” diaspora community also formed into a political entity at this time, when a mother nation and a state were attributed to it.

From the colonial administration’s point of view, the immigrants were and remained strangers; in the North American and Australian societies, slow assimilation was expected from the white settlers (contrary to the yellow and black immigrants, who were considered unassimilable and would rather not even let them in). The cultivation of strong political and cultural ties with the motherland – or transnationalism, a term originated by Nina Glick Schiller and her partners – was considered normal. A classic piece of modern sociology, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by William Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, was published in 1918, and even this volume held the principle both in its methodology and approach, that in order to give a thorough study of the life of migrants, the social connections with the land of origin must also be analysed. This dual habitation became undesirable only during the First World War, especially when seeing the activity of the remarkably active German-American patriotic societies, and who were called on by President Roosevelt to show their exclusive loyalty to the United States.

Around this time, the era of global mobility came to a natural end anyway, the era when nationalisms based on territory and on common blood could co-exist, especially in the surviving imperial states, and where the various diaspora communities played important roles. The following eighty years, characterized by reduced international migration, could be regarded as the heyday of the territory-based nation-state. The era began with the proclamation of the Wilsonian principles of ethnic self-determination, which, in ideal conditions, could lead to homogeneity. Instead, it saw the worst ethnic cleansing of all times, one of the largest-scale events of mass migration in world history: the population exchange between Greece and Turkey. The destination land, the receiving nation-state demanded the exclusive loyalty of the settlers. It also applied to newly formed states following the decolonization after the Second World War. Migrants had to become citizens, and if there was any doubt concerning their loyalty, they could pay with their livelihood or even their lives, as happened to the Indians in Uganda, or Chinese in Indonesia.

Migration and hybridity

In people’s imagination, but in fact in reality too, the end of Soviet socialism was linked with the strengthening revival of global mobility. The so-called socialist states limited the cross-border movement of people more than any other regime before. The collapse of the Iron Curtain (which, now we know, was only temporary) not only symbolized, but for many people truly signified the end of political-ideological autocracies, introvert state-socialism and closed borders. At the end of the 1980s, the attention of social scientists turned towards migration and diaspora communities, because in them they saw the cosmopolitan forerunners of the global society that was based on a free choice of identity after the demands of a nation-state. A series of works were published in the 1990s that described cosmopolitanism, hybridity and creolization as the typical features of the global society with intellectual competence: *The Location of Culture* by Homi Bhabha (1994), *Cultural Complexity* by Ulf Hannerz (1992), *Routes* by James Clifford (1997), *Modernity at Large* by Arjun Appadurai (1996) and *Diaspora* by Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin. The important point of reference of these works is migration and diaspora, but the authors are not so much concerned with the empirical study of these concepts, but more inspired by their methodological and ideological potentials.

This time, not only social science, but politics also approached migration with a positive attitude. The public of liberal democracies showed mainly sympathy towards the migrants arriving from behind the Iron Curtain, because of the assumption that these migrants were fleeing from dictatorship and/or ethnic oppression into the tolerant atmosphere of the liberal societies, and they also expected that these migrants would be sensitive towards political and cultural pluralism and human rights. At the beginning of the 1990s, when the first Chinese migrants appeared in Hungary, some liberal politicians believed that they were giving shelter to the victims of communism, and to whom they owed solidarity.

Migration and ethnic nationalism

However, it soon became clear that identifying the diasporas with cosmopolitanism or with some kind of hybrid identity is unfounded, at least as a general truth. In the wars between the states of the former Yugoslavia, a major role was attributed to the sudden revival of belligerent patriotism of Croatian, Serbian and Albanian migrants living in North America and Western Europe and their children who

were born there; what Benedict Anderson referred to as “distance nationalism”. The Chinese government put down the democratic movements of 1989 and, consequently, had to endure certain international sanctions and went through a crisis of legitimacy. The same Chinese government decided to ease the conditions of foreign travels on the one hand, then on the other, they took a new approach towards their diaspora politics, partly to compensate for the loss of western investments, and partly to prove their national commitments. From the mid-1950s, the policy of the Chinese Communist Party was to encourage assimilation into the host nation for those Chinese citizens who did not wish to return to the mother country, despite the party having a great base of support in the Southeast Asian Chinese diaspora. However, those who chose to return were subjected to persecution and being classified as bourgeois class enemies. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 1990s, the Popular Front Department of the Party decided to embrace again Chinese citizens living abroad, and sent delegations to meet them or invited them to visit, signalling that they were being considered as part of the mother nation again, initially only those who retained their Chinese citizenship, later the embrace was extended to those who have always been citizens of other countries. By the 2000s, the Chinese diaspora became an integral part of the new, or more appropriately reconstructed, nationalist narrative that regarded that every Chinese person is the descendant of the mythical (although today officially revered on a state-level) Yellow Emperor, thus brought together by blood kinship. It must also be noted, however, that this narrative does not support the other, still valid theory that the Chinese nation is made up of fifty-six equal ethnic groups, and its territory is defined by the boundaries of the land that they jointly inhabit.

Nowadays, the state uses both narratives simultaneously, and it is not alone in doing so. The Russian, Greek, Croatian, Indian, Hungarian and Caribbean concepts of nationhood have gone through a similar process since the 1990s. The exclusive sovereignty of the territory-based nation-state has been surpassed by the duality of supra-territorial and ethnicity/blood-based nations and the territorial but multi-ethnic nations. The notion of the de-territorialised nation-state (again, a term used by Nina Glick Schiller) probably gained expression in Fundamental Law only in Hungary, but the modes of integrating compatriots living abroad into the native political structures are various and widespread. So, the romantic-liberal concept of the diaspora communities has, again, been traded for a nationalistic view. Nonetheless, it is still easier in the diaspora to break out from the confines of the identity imposed by the nation-state, and to adopt

some sort of hybrid or cosmopolitan, even supranational religious identity. However, the space that has made it possible is contracting in many places, rather than expanding. The various national identities articulated in Beijing, Ankara or Budapest are becoming more and more dominant beyond their country borders respectively. Parallel to this, the concept that considers migrants as foreign bodies that are unassimilable and dangerous to the culture and social cohesion of the host society is gaining strength. What is more, this time these notions have also been adopted by some liberal thinkers, reinforcing their nationalistic premises concerning the homogeneity and cohesion of cultures, or the natural union of nation-state-territory.

Their reasoning is that the masses of migrants arriving from less cosmopolitan cultural mediums will inevitably erode the values of the liberal host society, although the very same European liberal values are cosmopolitan too, and they made the reception of these migrants itself possible. Even with all the support to back the arguments against this liberal paradox, the assumption referring to the durability of these values and the fundamental cosmopolitanism of European societies is highly questionable. This can be seen in the changes (say, between 1938 and 1968) of the values accepted by the dominant majority in German society, but also even in the Hungarian, where the industrial modernisation, achieved within the confines of state socialism, managed to suppress the formerly dominant feudal, racist perspectives into a marginal role, without any kind of migration. Hence, it is not clear at all what those dominant values are that these migrants are putting into danger. This assumption only slightly differs from the interfering social policy represented by certain states in Eastern Asia and the Arabian Gulf (e.g. Singapore, UAE), that openly plans the demographics and actively manipulates the ethnic composition of the state. The open practice of this sort of social policy was unacceptable in Europe after the Second World War; however, nowadays it has become part of the ideology of certain sections of the European far-right, including the Hungarian government.

Migration and cosmopolitanism

In general, migration today strengthens the nationalistic ideologies on both sides: the country of origin and the country of settlement. Naturally though, there are numerous other aspects that reinforce the cosmopolitan worldview, for example individual life stories and experiences. In this respect, the diaspora studies and literature of the 1990s mainly highlight the liberation from the obligation of having to choose an identity. Since then, not only did the shift in

the distribution of the world's power and assets send millions of low-skilled migrants on their way, but it also resulted in the patterns of elite-migration being passed down to the populous middle-classes of India, China, Korea and Brazil, while elite-migration was formerly only typical of Western societies. These migrations are still directed predominantly towards the West, but Indian and Chinese multinational companies are increasingly sending thousands of engineers and managers into Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin-America, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. As the migrants get familiar with the new, unfamiliar ways of life, they develop not only a new ability that helps them appreciate the hitherto unknown pleasures and experiences, but also a new perspective that allows them to see the workings of the world through the eyes of others, a skill that Ulf Hannerz called "competent cosmopolitanism". The migration of students also creates a similar outcome. While today, on a yearly basis, there are still thousands of students setting out from Asia to North America and Europe, among the student volunteers of AISEC, the largest international student organisation, the number of Chinese volunteers flooding to the poorest parts of the world surpasses any other nation. Most of these volunteers return from the villages or urban slums of Russia, India or Africa with newly-formed strong emotional bonds to not only the locals but to the volunteers of western societies, and these bonds were established through common experiences that would have been outside their comfort zone.

Competent cosmopolitanism could emerge in the destination or host countries too, even where nationalistic reactions are usually more prevalent. In Hungary, where contrary to China, international or localised volunteering is not normally in fashion, it seems that the appearance of refugees by their thousands, or as Giorgio Agamben put it, confronting "bare life", has generated a cathartic feeling in many, and put into motion a rarely seen dimension of humanism. The explosive willingness to help suggests that in Hungary, where society tends to be socialised into nationalism, the sight of a helpless, vulnerable stranger liberated a repressed desire to perform a humanitarian act (words of my colleague, Margit Feischmidt).

This duality can also be traced in how Chinese public life reacted to the current European refugee crisis. The Chinese media have not taken sides in the matter of interpreting the crisis in terms of humanitarianism or national security. However, the reactions of the public on the internet are polarised. On one side, in accordance with the dominant nationalist narrative, is gloating over the situation: that will teach a lesson to the West, why they had to interfere in Syria, all the better for China. Another part of public opinion identifies with

the growing Islamophobia, and demands the interning/detaining of these migrants. However, sympathy towards the refugees is probably still the most widespread opinion, and this is remarkable as China has not signed the Geneva Convention, so does not recognise the universal right to asylum. For me, the most hopeful reaction came from a young Chinese businessman, who settled in Hungary under the investor-immigrant scheme wanting to provide his son with healthier living conditions and a better, more creative, freer education (Yes!). Although many of his friends found his decision very strange, he is enjoying himself in his villa with a garden in Buda, and is a keen connoisseur of Hungarian wines. This in itself fulfils that caricature which presents cosmopolitanism as the pastime of the wealthy, or in this case, the elite-migrants invited and favoured by governments, that has nothing to do with solidarity towards the poor. This young businessman, however, even if not actively supportive of the refugees who have been rejected by his chosen country, considers the government policy disheartening and embarrassing. What is more, several young Chinese people, who grew up in Hungary, actively helped the refugees.