



Postoji li alternativa nacionalnoj drzavi?

«Nation building and beyond»

by János Kis

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NATION-BUILDING AND BEYOND

by János Kis

I

In his article on ethnic relations and Western (liberal) political theory, Will Kymlicka proposes to take the nation-building state as given and to focus on variations in the ways ethnocultural diversity is handled in the course of the process of nation-building. "[T]he issue is not, he says, *whether* states engage in nation-building but rather what *kind* of nation-building" (p.31.). I disagree.

To be sure, the political organization of any modern society requires a population which is literate, is capable of communicating with the public officials, shares a sense of common identity, and recognizes the institutions claiming authority over it as its own. Call the population endowed with these characteristics, a *political community*. In so far as the characteristics of a political community are not naturally given but need to be created before or in the course of or after the emergence of the political organization, any attempt at establishing authoritative political institutions is preceded or accompanied or followed by a process of transforming the subject population into a political community. Nation-building is such a process. But it is only a special case in building political communities, one which corresponds to the rise of the political organization usually called the *nation-state*.

In the course of the last three centuries, the nation-state succeeded to displace all the pre-modern systems of political authority. Unlike these, it is territorially based. Although pre-modern systems generally claimed control over an area, too, that claim was based on the fact that the area in question was the homeland of the people bound by ties of loyalty to a political ruler.

Unlike most pre-modern systems, the nation-state has centralized organization. That is, it has a body (a central government) vested with supreme authority such that any other body within the relevant territory is subordinated to it while it is not subordinated to any other body within the same territory.

Unlike most pre-modern systems, the nation-state has direct access to all its subjects (those living on its territory); i.e., at least some of their rights and obligations are

defined at the level of the central government, and the enforcement is not delegated to intermediary bodies.

Territoriality, centralization and direct access are generally treated as jointly defining the state in its full-blown, modern sense. The nation-state displays two further important characteristics. First, it claims exclusive authority over its territory; i.e., the jurisdictions of two nation-states are supposed not to overlap (so that whenever two or more states claim control over the same domain, this fact is a symptom of an international dispute rather than of a mutually recognized, permanent status quo). Second, nation-states are supposed to be sovereign in their domestic affairs; they are not subjected to the rule either of distant colonial centers or of occupying forces, nor are they subordinated to any supra-national body with government authority and enforcement mechanisms.

In this Rejoinder, I will call nation-states such states which command unrestricted sovereignty over mutually exclusive jurisdictions. My claim is that nation-building as we know it presupposes an international regime of nation-states.

The nation-state as a form of political organization and the nation as a community of the state's subjects are linked by their name, but their connection is not a conceptual one. A state can have the characteristics of exclusive jurisdiction and unrestricted sovereignty without being the state of a nation. Absolute monarchies are illuminating examples. There is, though, a strong empirical connection between the two phenomena. The rise of the nation-state regime exerted, indeed, a tremendous pressure on subject populations to consolidate themselves into nations.

The view that the state belongs to a ruling family or a ruling aristocracy to which all the other subjects owe with personal loyalty is extremely difficult to maintain in a territorially based state with direct links between the center and any anonymous individual. In order for the authority claim of such a state to be (and to be perceived as being) legitimate, the state must belong to all its subjects. Furthermore, the subjects, in their turn, must be tied to each other by horizontal bonds of loyalty. A modern state is in need in a shared belief that its subjects recognize each others as members of a political community and the state as their own political organization. Where the state is a nation-state, the political community shaped by it is a nation. Because the modern state system emerged as a system of nation-states, nation-building had virtually no competitors as a

pattern of building modern political communities.

Nation-building starts from a situation where the subject population is divided by multiple and crisscrossing group identities. Individual subjects speak different languages and dialects, they profess different religions, their ordinary lives are informed by different cultural practices, rules, and beliefs. The same individual might speak a regional dialect of language A, belong to a religious community mostly comprising speakers of dialects of language B, and indulge in practices characteristic of a region inhabited mainly by speakers of a dialect of language C. None of his identities dominates as of necessity the others, nor is he necessarily tied by any of these to all those permanently living on the territory of the state. Nation-building has for task, first, to consolidate some of these ties at the level of the whole state (e.g., by substituting a literary language for regional dialects, one which is made the official language of the state and taught in all the public schools) and, second, to make them predominant, at least for political aims, over all other ties of loyalty. Unlike pre-political ethnic groups which are shading into each other, share overlapping and fluid homelands, and allow for multiple identities, nations claim to divide the human population into “insiders” and “outsiders”, so that participation in those reference groups is a matter of “yes” or “no”, and aspire to be sovereign over an exclusive fatherland with sharp and fixed boundaries.

The historically predominant pattern of nation-building consisted in uniting one of the loosely connected regional, dialectal and subcultural groups into a single national community, while leaving the members of those ethnocultural groups left out of the emerging nation confronted by the alternative of either assimilating to the nation, or resigning to a marginal social position within the state, or emigrating, or else mobilizing as a group with the aim of seceding and establishing their own state.

This pattern of nation-building which is generally called nationalist and which leads to the establishment of *one-nation states* is the target of Kymlicka’s criticism. There are fairly obvious reasons to abhor nationalism. It is dangerous for internal stability as well as for international peace. It is likely to generate conflict situations where a high premium is put on terrorism on behalf of the minority and on preventive genocide and ethnic cleansing on behalf of the majority. Yet, even in the absence of such monstrous consequences, the nationalist path to nation-building would still be unacceptable because a one-nation state tends to be inherently *unjust*. Whenever the state comprises, within its

jurisdiction, more than one ethnocultural communities, the one-nation model fails to meet the standards of what Kymlicka calls 'ethnocultural justice'. It unfairly disadvantages ethnocultural minorities by depriving them (but not the national majority) of public status and of the politically allocated resources necessary for their culture to be preserved and to flourish. This is Kymlicka's central objection to nation-building as we know it.

But he also believes that "the issue is not, *whether* states engage in nation-building but rather what *kind* of nation-building". That assumption leaves us with versions of one single alternative to the building of a one-nation state, an alternative which amounts to erecting a kind of a state which Kymlicka calls '*multination state*'. Unlike one-nation states, a multination state gives public recognition to minority groups as equal partners in the national community, and provides these groups with the rights and resources necessary for them to prosper.

This Rejoinder will not question the soundness of preferring, under the conditions of ethnic diversity, the multination state to the one-nation state. I agree that the former is much closer to meet the standards of ethnocultural justice than the latter. But I don't share the belief that alternatives to nation-building can be safely neglected.

The division of the world into nation-states is not the only conceivable modern state system. Institutions vested with political authority and powers of enforcement, more inclusive than the territorial states, can and do emerge. Some of these may have territorial jurisdiction (such as, e.g., the European Court of Human Rights or its Latin American counterpart), others may lack it (such as the World Trade Organization). Some may have direct access to individual subjects (again, international courts are an example), others (e.g., bodies which supervise arms reduction) may be lacking of it. Some may be specialized on a very narrow range of functions (a supra-state environment protection agency is such a case), while others having a wide and potentially expanding range of functions (think of the European Union). And, jointly, these institutions fail to submit to a central government. Although many organizations with a global reach (such as the United Nations) do exist, indeed, the majority of the other supra-state organizations are not subordinated to any authority with a global reach. Rather, they are drawing crisscrossing lines of authority. They are eminently political institutions because those under their control have an obligation to comply with their directives and because very often they are in a possession of some enforcement mechanisms, but (with some

exceptions) they fail to meet the conditions which are characteristic of states. The more the number of such supra-state institutions increases, and the wider their powers to interfere with internal matters become, the less it is justified to consider restrictions of state sovereignty as something trivial. The global regime of nation-states may be heading towards its end.

This trend started towards the end of the Second World War, and goes on at an accelerating speed since the 1970s. We have good reasons to believe that it will continue in the future. This is because the processes which give rise to a demand in coordination across state borders and, thus, in restriction of state sovereignty, are highly unlikely to be reversed. The rise of transnational corporations exposes the regulatory and taxation capabilities of nation-states to a severe test. The globalization of the financial markets reduces the ability of domestic governments to pursue social policies on their own. The increase in labor migration makes the clear-cut division between citizens and non-citizens, an important feature of the traditional concept of citizenry, more and more obsolete. Modern technologies, such as the informatique, defy localized control. External (for example, environmental) effects of economic activities run in one state on the well-being of another go cumulating. Weapons of mass destruction become easily accessible to any government, even to non-governmental terrorist groups. Man-caused famines and epidemics take unprecedented size. The widening gap between rich and poor societies is more and more difficult either to justify or to tolerate without endangering international stability.

The fact of these pressures as well as of the tendency of nation-states to adapt to their challenges by surrendering to supra-state organizations one chunk of their sovereignty after another, seem to be beyond controversy. Less obvious is the possibility that, parallel to the erosion of the principle of state sovereignty, the principle of exclusive jurisdiction may start eroding as well. This Rejoinder will try to show that there are chances for this second trend to take off and, that, should the processes of restricting state sovereignty combine with those of establishing overlapping jurisdictions, the bases of nation-building as we know it might be undermined.

Section Two will attempt to establish the claim that if ethnocultural justice requires, as Kymlicka shows it does, that the one-nation state sometimes give way to the multination state, then ethnocultural justice also requires that exclusive jurisdiction

sometimes give way to overlapping jurisdictions. The remaining part of Section Two will deal with the objection that such a development would be either unfeasible or unattractive.

Section Three will address a different kind of objection, that of practical irrelevance. Designing alternatives to the nation-state regime might be an interesting but fruitless exercise, so the objection runs, because we are very far from the situation where the nature of building political communities would be significantly affected by the changes in the global institutional environment. In support my suggestion that this view is mistaken, I will describe an empirical story, that of the recent evolution in Hungarian nationalism. I hope to be able to show that the perception of the strategic options for the Hungarian nation undergoes significant changes which are, in their turn, induced by Hungary's getting into the orbit of the European Union. A brief note on the perspectives of this evolution will be offered in Section Four.

All this is not to deny that the multination state is an option by far superior to its one-nation rival in terms of justice and, that, it is not inferior to the one-nation state in terms of stability. My aim is rather to suggest that a third option is taking shape, that of gradually overcoming the nation-state altogether. If this is so, then there are good reasons to encourage the integration of post-communist Eastern and East Central Europe into the web of supra-state organizations, and to encourage the involvement of these organizations with the task of handling ethnocultural diversity in this region.

II

In what follows I will assume with Kymlicka that, in countries with ethnically mixed populations, minority self-government is among the requirements of ethnocultural justice. As it stands, this is a statement with vague contours. It leaves open the question, how robust a minority self-government is required by ethnocultural justice. One of the main issues which demand further elaboration concerns the *vertical reach* of self-government. Public administration has a complex hierarchical structure, and minority self-government might exist at various levels of this hierarchy. The question of vertical reach asks, how far self-government must reach upwards, in order that the autonomy requirement of ethnocultural justice is met.

Imagine a country with a municipal organization of three levels: local communities, counties and regions. Suppose the country's population is divided into an ethnic majority and an ethnic minority. Call minority homeland the geographic area where the minority represents more than some percentage (say, 50%) of the inhabitants. And let it be the case that the homeland in question extends over the territory of two counties. The story I would like to consider is this. The minority asks for self-government in a petition to the national legislature. The number of signatories is so large that the initiative can safely be taken as expressing the will of the minority community. The issue is put on the legislature's agenda.

No political actor denies that the minority has a right to self-government in its homeland. There is no agreement, however, as to the vertical reach of the self-government it has a right to. Majority parties are unwilling to accept self-government on a level higher than that of the two separate counties. Minority representatives call for a redesigning of the state's regional division in such a way that the two counties are united in one self-governing region.

Do considerations of ethnocultural justice support the minority claim? Do they require that the state give way to the minority desire to erect its own government over the homeland it inhabits? I can see three weighty reasons which support a positive answer.

First, higher-level decisions constrain the choices open to lower-level decision makers. For example, many local communities might find themselves unable to establish a new school without external financial support. If the region is a level of effective municipal government where decisions about allocation of public funds (between competing aims and competing localities) are being made, then the minority has an obvious interest in getting control over that level. And even if the region were to be absent from the municipal organization of the state in question, the minority would still have an obvious interest in getting the counties of its homeland combined into a single higher-level administrative unit so that it has the means to govern that area as a whole.

Of course, the majority's interests conflict with the interest of the minority on this. But there is a weighty reason to give priority to the minority interest. In a country whose population is divided into a standing majority and a standing minority, the burdens and benefits of the political organization are distributed unevenly in the first place. To belong to the majority means to enjoy an initial advantage in the access to the public officials, to

careers and other resources allocated through political channels. To belong to the minority means to suffer cumulative disadvantages in all these respects. Justice requires, however, that the burdens and benefits of having a common state be allocated equally over the citizenry. Therefore, those who are structurally disadvantaged by the system need to be compensated for their disadvantages. The public institutions need to be designed in such a way as to countervail, in so far as this is possible, the initial bias against them. Securing municipal self-government over the minority homeland as a whole is one of the most important countervailing mechanisms. And so it is plausible to claim that ethnocultural justice requires providing the minority homeland with an autonomous municipal organization.

Second, one of the channels through which social groups organize themselves is offered by the very institutions of public administration. Access to these institutions secures tremendous competitive advantages of self-organization over those groups to which such access is denied. The general strategy of liberal polities in treating this problem amounts to separating the public and the private, to making sure that no distinctive group can parasitize on government institutions for the aims of self-organization. A paradigm for such separation is presented by the liberal treatment of the relationships between state and church. However, ethnic divisions are to a large degree immune to the application of the separation strategy. The government can refuse to adopt any belief in religious matters (including atheism) to be part of its official doctrine. It cannot refuse to adopt at least one language to serve as the medium of official communication. Nor can it avoid designating official holidays, identifying the founding fathers of the state, marking the great events of the state's history, and so on. As of necessity, some ethnic group will have access to public institutions, even if these are being strictly separated from all private organizations. In the dimension of ethnic diversity, therefore, the choice is not one between making the state blind to the differences or allowing the largest ethnic group to prevail, but one between distributing access to public institutions as equally as possible, or allowing privileged access to some ethnic groups. The pure separation strategy amounts to allowing privileged access to the majority. Securing self-government at the level of the minority homeland is one way of equalizing the access to the public channels of self-organization.

A third consideration is this. Beyond providing social groups with organizational

and material resources, access to public institutions is a means for them to gain symbolic recognition as constitutive members of the political community. A group is not perceived as a constitutive part of the political community if it is denied that status in the public domain which other groups do enjoy as a matter of course. Such a deprivation is not remedied by the fact that the group's individual members have full citizenship and are free of personal discrimination. If it is true that the way an individual is perceived by his peers depends on the way his ethnic group is perceived by them, so that an individual whose group does not enjoy a status equal to that of others cannot expect to be treated with the respect due to an equal, then the right of the individual to be treated with equal concern and respect, demands that the publicly recognized status of all the ethnic groups within the state be equal. And so the requirement of equal public recognition demands that ethnic minorities are not denied the access to the highest levels of public administration which can be subjected to its self-government without unjustly disadvantaging some other group.

I conclude that ethnocultural justice demands that the minority desire to establish self-government over its homeland is satisfied, unless some overriding reason tips the balance in the other direction.

What could serve as such a reason? Rather than engaging in a general discussion of this question, I will consider here one particular candidate for this role. Suppose the two counties into which the homeland of our ethnic group is administratively partitioned lie on the territories of two different states. Suppose the ethnic group so divided enjoys full recognition in both states, and is self-governing in each of the two counties. However, a very large part of its members express their desire, in a petition submitted to the two state legislatures, to unite in a single autonomous political unit. Does the fact that the two counties are separated by a state border rather than a mere administrative boundary make a difference for the moral standing of this demand? Does it give rise to a reason against satisfying the minority demand, weighty enough to override it? The answer to this question will be decisive for the assessment of the claim I formulated at the end of Section One. A positive answer would imply that the inference from the right to minority self-government within the borders of a nation-state to the right to minority self-government over an area which cuts across state borders is mistaken. A negative answer would provide that inference with strong support.

There is a tendency to believe that the distinction between administrative boundaries and state borders is of a decisive significance. In the intra-state case, meeting the minority demand does not involve more than redistributing government powers within the same state jurisdiction. In the inter-state case, redesigning state jurisdictions themselves is involved. There are two standard ways to do this: either one of the subgroups secedes from its state in order to join the other, or both secede from their respective states in order to form their own independent state.

Secession, however, raises special problems which the creation of autonomous units within one and the same state does not. It deprives the mother state of territory and natural resources. It confronts many individuals with a coercive choice between accepting an involuntary change of their citizenship or emigrating. These are serious concerns in themselves, and they can give rise to further difficulties. Secessionist movements are likely to be resisted by means of force, to provoke oppression, genocide and ethnic cleansing, to unleash internal wars or even wars between states. For all these reasons, unless it occurs by mutual agreement of all the concerned parties, secession cannot be claimed to be a minority right on the ground that the minority has a right to self-government over its homeland which, in this case, cannot be secured unless secession is allowed. The mere fact that the distribution of state jurisdictions unfavorably affects an ethnic group does not establish a case for the secession of the group. In order for such a case can be made, the minority must suffer systematic discrimination and persecution, including gross violations of individual human rights. Secession is a remedy of last resort for this kind of injustices.

Thus, there is a significant moral difference between the claim to an autonomous region within the bounds of a state and the claim to seceding from that state. But this finding is not decisive for our question unless it is the case that the standard ways to unite an ethnic group divided by state frontiers, i.e. the ways which include secession, are the only conceivable avenues towards minority self-government over its homeland if that homeland cuts across state boundaries. I want to maintain that they are not. There is a further possibility, that of uniting the minority homeland under the joint authority of the two (or more) states. We know at least one attempt in contemporary Europe to resolve conflict in this manner, that of creating an autonomous government in Northern Ireland under the joint supervision by the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

One could quickly answer that even if it will prove successful, the Northern Irish model is unlikely to be applied in other places of the world. The grounds seem to be obvious. Such a solution makes the policy options of a state which joins the agreement too closely dependent on the conduct of another state and, moreover, it involves the risk that giving up exclusive authority over a domain will ultimately lead to losing authority over that domain altogether.

This answer is all too quick, though. It relies on the tacit assumption that the world remains a home of nation-states, except that there will be some experimenting with ethnic self-government under joint authority of two or more states. So long as the nation-state regime remains intact, the chances for a political arrangement of overlapping state jurisdictions to be more than a transition from one regime of exclusive jurisdictions to another one are very slim indeed. But my argument is predicated on the assumption that the global state system is undergoing mutually reinforcing changes of restricting state sovereignty. Think of the European Union where national governments are more and more constrained from above by supra-national bodies of the EU and from below by regions crossing state borders and gaining autonomy and direct access to the EU's central institutions. States enmeshed in a thick web of supra-state organizations have at hand an arsenal of practices, rules and procedures which help to handle conflicts of overlapping authority, an arsenal which is not available to nation-states. Moreover, a long evolutionary experience with cooperation within such a web is likely to change the mutual expectations of the participants. The expectation that unilateral cooperative moves will *not* be reciprocated is a very strong motivating factor of nation-state action towards each others. This expectation might give way to more positive ones in a framework of supra-state institutions with powers of enforcement. Important sources of destabilizing behavior might be fading away.

But if the stability of overlapping state jurisdictions relies on the growth of supra-state institutions, then there is a different kind of objection for us to face. From Immanuel Kant to John Rawls, liberal philosophers tend to agree that an "amalgamation of states ... would end in one universal monarchy" and, that, such a "universal monarchy" would tend to be despotic on the one hand, and would risk to fall prey of anarchy on the other. I am not sure whether this gloomy prediction does indeed hold for a hypothetical world government. If, however, it is the nature of a centralized global state which is believed to

involve the twin dangers of despotism and anarchy, then the objection does not apply to the evolution of the world my argument relies upon. As it was already in Section One, the emerging supra-state institutions do not tend to unite under one single central authority. Rather than giving rise to an almighty Global Leviathan, their proliferation gives rise to a pattern of crisscrossing lines of authority, to something like a supra-state checks and balances. Unacceptably slow and cumbersome decision-making at the supra-state level seems to be more of a danger than universal despotism spilling over into universal anarchy.

In sum, we must not assume that the format of an autonomous ethnic homeland simultaneously belonging to the jurisdictions of two or more states would either be inherently unstable or relying, for its stability, on a despotic supra-state organization. The joint jurisdiction solution is on the list of feasible and attractive options.

It is plausible to claim that delegating parts of state sovereignty to supra-state agencies and allowing for overlapping state jurisdictions enlarges the strategic options available for handling the problem of ethnocultural diversity in a just manner. But do these trends also affect the shaping of political communities? Do they point beyond what is generally called nation-building?

Because we are at the very beginning of the process, I am talking about, one can hardly make reliable predictions in detail. But there are at least two important innovations we can safely assume to play a role in shaping the political communities of the future. The first is this. Whether or not a nation-state is ready to allow that the *individual citizen* divides his loyalties between his particular ethnic group and the nation, in no case does it leave room for the *ethnic groups* inhabiting its territory to divide their collective loyalties. Not even a multination state can accommodate an ethnic group which splits its political loyalties between it and another state *on the same level*. An arrangement where an ethnic homeland is united under the joint authority of two or more states, allows for divided loyalties not only in the case of the individual but in the case of the ethnic group as well.

The other innovation is that ethnic groups inhabiting a state which is enmeshed in a network of supra-state organizations may find advantage in institutionalized access to some such organizations whether or not these latter are sharing the characteristics of territorial states. This is important because an organization without territorial jurisdiction

cannot possibly host a political community. While some of the supra-state institutions creating a higher-level framework for possible political identification (think of the incipient European citizenship), others offer purely instrumental levers for political action to social (including ethnocultural) groups. This might be a cause for worry from the point of view of the future of democracy, but it is a source of hope from the point of view of de-dramatizing inter-ethnic relationships.

Let me summarize this section's argument. I read Kymlicka as taking the world of sovereign states with exclusive jurisdiction as a given, and assuming that ethnocultural justice can be achieved within such states. I argue, in part by appealing to Kymlicka's own arguments for minority rights, that if justice requires that ethnocultural groups located within the borders of one state have the access to self-government over their homeland, then it also requires that ethnocultural groups located across state borders be able to develop some forms of common governance over their homeland. In a world of nation-states, the only way to develop such forms of common governance is through secession and irredentism, which is not morally justified (except as a last resort). However, if we move beyond the assumptions of the nation-state, then we can envisage a form of common governance that involves joint authority. Such a model might not be stable if it were the only exception to the otherwise undisputed principles of state sovereignty and exclusive jurisdiction. There are wider processes, though, challenging the assumptions of the nation-state, and such a model of joint authority can take its place amidst the developing web of overlapping jurisdictions and shared sovereignty. These processes do not point in the direction of a World Government and, thus, traditional worries about the rise of a Global Leviathan oscillating between despotism and anarchy (whether or not they are justified with regard to a hypothetical World Government) do not apply to it. Finally, we have some reasons to assume that the political communities informed by a post-nation state political organization will lose at least some of the unattractive features of nations as we know them.

As developed above, my argument has direct application to the case where two (or more) kin groups, all of them in a minority position in their respective states, seek to associate with each other across state boundaries. We can imagine the Basques in Spain and in France to entertain such an aim. There are further cases which are different from the two-minorities case in important respects. An ethnic group might be distributed in

such a way that one part of it is in a minority position in one country while the other making up the majority in another. Such is the case of the Hungarians after the Versailles and Paris peace treaties. In order to fit these cases, the argument needs further elaboration. That is not part of this Rejoinder, though. In order to challenge the claim I am attributing to Kymlicka, the more abstract reasoning made above must suffice.

III

Even if defensible in principle, is the idea of overcoming the nation-state regime relevant for the contemporary world? Can it contribute to devise viable strategies of handling ethnocultural diversity – here and now? The collapse of the Soviet world system left the successor states with an enormous amount of ethnic and national conflicts – can the thesis of this Rejoinder be of any help to attack them?

This question requires a drastic change in the level of discussion. Section Two presented an abstract normative argument. In this Section, we must turn to empirical description. I will try to show, on the example of recent developments in Hungarian nationalism, that already now the change of the international environment has an impact on the perception of the political alternatives.

Let me begin by stating the “national question” as it is seen by the Hungarians. The contemporary history of the “Hungarian case” started when the First World War was concluded by the Versailles peace treaty. Hungary found itself cut-off, as a result of that treaty, from two-thirds of its historic territory and one-third of the ethnic Hungarian population. Dismemberment of the traditional state of Hungary came as a shock for the ruling classes, and they reacted by adopting an uncritical stance of irredentism, supported by a myth of Hungarian supremacy and special mission in the Carpathian basin. The central issue for Hungarian nationalists became, how to undo the terms of the peace.

Official irredentism has set the target of restoring the Kingdom of St. Steven as it stood until the war, with a reckless disregard for the ethno-demographic realities in the areas detached from Hungary, and without giving serious thought to the strategic isolation of the country. Under the tutelage of France, the inheritor states have been united into a so-called Petite Entente to contain Hungarian revisionist claims. In order to

break out of their isolation, the country's rulers tried, first, to seek alliance with Great Britain, a power supposed to be interested in containing the influence of France in Eastern Europe. When this attempt failed, they turned to the fascist Italy for support. Finally, in the second half of the 1930s, they ended up as satellites to Nazi Germany. In Hitler, they found a leader ready and able to return to Hungary large segments of its detached territories. Paradoxically, the two consecutive "Vienna decisions" did what President Wilson promised to do: they brought very close the state jurisdictions to the distribution of ethnic populations.

That outcome proved to be fatal, though. First, it sealed the isolation of the non-nationalist (Liberal, Social Democratic and Communist) left which was very weak anyway. Second, the enormous popularity of the Vienna decisions defeated the only serious attempt to propose a more accommodating nationalist policy, the one made by the movement of populist intellectuals in the 1930s. The populists suggested that, confronted by a "pan-Slavic danger" from the East and by a "pan-Germanic danger" from the West, Hungary should give up its irredentist aims and join hands with the small peasant nations in the Danube area for a mutual defense. After the first "Vienna Decision", the idea of a Danube alliance vanished, of course.

Finally, and most tragically, the hope to gain further territorial concessions and the fear of losing those already won, propelled Hungary into the war with Yugoslavia and with the Soviet Union. War participation was leading to greatest national catastrophe Hungary suffered in its modern history: to the deportation and extermination of about four fifths of the Hungarian Jewish population, to the mob rule of the Hungarian Nazis at the turn of 1944/1945, to war destruction, an imposed peace treaty undoing all the territorial gains, and Soviet occupation for the next 45 years.

In the first decades of the Soviet rule, the consequences of the two wars could not be discussed in public. As the single greatest beneficiary of the new international arrangements, the Soviet Union did not allow its satellites either officially to challenge the post-war status quo or even to tolerate unofficial criticism of it. Losers and winners alike were reduced to silence about the treatment of their ethnic brethren by neighboring states. Until about the end of the 1960s, the mere fact of the existence of ethnic Hungarians beyond the borders of Hungary was largely ignored within the country.

The rebirth of Hungarian nationalism was marked by a rediscovery, in the course

of the 1970s, of the Hungarian minority cultures and by attempts to reintegrate these into the general culture of the Hungarian nation. Literary magazines began to publish Hungarian authors from Transylvania, Slovakia and the Voivodina; in increasing numbers, young people visited the regions where minority Hungarians lived, etc. A self-image of the Hungarian nation as cutting across the frontiers of the Hungarian state was slowly taking shape.

A leading role in this process of rediscovery and reintegration has been played by the new generation of populist intellectuals. New populism, like the old one, was driven by a concern for the mere survival of the Hungarian nation. A significant shift occurred, however, in the focus of this concern. In the midst of the turmoils of the inter-war period, the old populists perceived the main danger as threatening the existence of what remained of the state of Hungary. These fears overshadowed the concern for the fate of the Hungarian minorities abroad. In the decades of cold war stability, the Hungarian statehood (even if not independence) seemed fairly secure. Thus, the anxiety for the Hungarians outside of Hungary, for their capacity to resist oppression and forced assimilation became the main preoccupation of the new populists. To these worries, the small-state nationalism and the virtual alliance of the Danube people could not possibly offer an answer. As soon as the movement of rediscovery reached the point where it came to raising political questions, the new populism had to depart from the old one. It could either move backwards, in the direction of the suprematism and irredentism of the pre-war ruling classes, an ideology the old populists rejected with scorn and contempt, or else it could move forwards, in the direction of adopting the modern discourse of minority rights. Both possibilities have been experimented with in the 1980s. The playwright István Csurka who was to emerge, in the 1990s, as the leader of an extreme right-wing party, voiced the first option. The second option has been tried by the leading figure of the new populist generation, Sándor Csoóri. In a preface to the autobiography of Miklós Duray, a Hungarian minority rights activist in Slovakia, Csoóri identified communist totalitarianism as the main culprit for the plight of minority Hungarians. It was the absence of multi-party democracy, of private property, and of church autonomy, Csoóri maintained, which deprived the minority of any institutional defense. Political, social and economic pluralism emerged from this diagnosis as the bulwarks which protect minorities against oppression, forced assimilation and forced segregation.

Actually, Csoóri's thinking represented an amalgam of these ideas and of traditional, anti-modernist rhetoric so dear to many of the old populists. Even so, his adoption of the talk of democracy and rights was to become a milestone in the evolution of Hungarian nationalism, one which deserves appreciation. A learning process has been started.

As the rediscovery of the minority issue reached the political level in the early 1980s, nationalist intellectuals had to face the question, where to look for international support. The Soviet Union could not be expected to be a partner, so the populists had to turn towards the West.

This happened in the years following the conclusion of the Helsinki Accords. Some of the Western parties to that agreement, particularly the United States, were ready to make use of the changing international framework to pressure the Soviet Union and its dependencies to comply better with international human rights standards. To the degree as their perception of the complex game with the Soviet rulers permitted this, they were responsive to complaints of East Europeans, provided those complaints have been expressed in terms of rights-claims rather than nationalist grievances. This is why the politics of human rights of the region's democratic oppositions could be successful in the international arena. And this is why Hungarian nationalists themselves had to engage in a process of learning the rights-discourse.

When it came to the collapse of the communist regime and to the transition to democracy, the political landscape of the country was significantly different from that between the two wars. First, non-nationalist parties held a solid share of the parliamentary mandates (somewhat more than 40% in 1990, more than 70% in 1994, about 40% in 1998). Second, non-nationalist and mainstream nationalist parties alike agreed on the priority of getting Hungary admitted to NATO and the European Union. József Antall, chairman of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (a party issued from the populist movement which won the first free elections), proved to be as firm on this issue than any other political leader of the country. And, thus, the learning process continued.

At the beginning, Antall seems to have entertained some hopes that a firm Euro-Atlantic commitment might not conflict with attempts to exploit the post-communist instability in the region to regain lost territories. In July 1991, he told to the Italian president that the Southern borders of Hungary have not been established with Serbia by

the two peace treaties but, in Versailles, with the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian State and, in Paris, with Yugoslavia. Therefore, Antall concluded, in the case of a dissolution of the Yugoslav federal state, the status of the Voivodina was open for renegotiation. In the same year, his government facilitated secret arms shipments to Croatia, shortly before it seceded from the Yugoslav federation, and the war broke out.

There is some indirect evidence that Antall might have been encouraged in this move by the then German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. If so, then we have a plausible explanation for the absence of any follow up to this adventure. After the outbreak of the war, Germany quickly abandoned its separate game in the Balkans, and Hungary's new leaders had to learn that the EU will not be a partner in challenging the status quo. It was made clear that no former communist country can hope for admission to the EU until it makes credible efforts to resolve its historic conflicts with its neighbors.

At the same time, Europe offered a set of international standards, including provisions on minority rights, in terms of which conflict resolution could be sought. The Council of Europe was particularly active in this respect. Thus, the Antall-government was being pushed in the direction of exploiting the European legal and political framework in its search for an accommodation with the neighboring countries. Minority rights, especially language rights and the right to minority schooling, plus cultural and territorial autonomy became the key words in the government's vocabulary. A new strategy began to take shape.

In 1992, the Antall-government struck a basic treaty with the Ukraine, in which Hungary recognized the frontiers between the two countries as inviolable. True, in the parliamentary debate, Antall declared that he considered the Hungarian-Ukrainian treaty an exception, not to be followed by any parallel agreements with Rumania and Slovakia. The fact remains that the treaty has set a precedent which the next government, elected in 1994, could follow.

The Socialist-Liberal government made a similar treaty with Slovakia in 1995 and with Rumania in 1996. Both treaties improved upon the original model in including, along with a no territorial revendications clause, a long list of minority rights and privileges. They also contained, as an Annex, the Recommendation 1201 of the Parliamentary Commission of the Council of Europe on minority rights (with a note, in

the case of the treaty with Rumania, to the effect that the parties read the Recommendation 1201 as not entailing provisions of collective rights).

The right-wing opposition attacked both treaties in harsh terms. But it was cautious enough not to reject the very structure of the deal. What they objected to was mainly the list of rights and privileges pinned down by the two treaties which they judged insufficient. Particularly, they blamed the government for not insisting on the inclusion of the principle of an ethnically based territorial autonomy and for accepting, in the case of the treaty with Rumania, that a note is added denying that Recommendation 1201 provided for collective rights as distinct from rights held by individuals severally. Although the rhetoric used in the debate was that of traditional nationalism (an analogy was drawn, by no less a political figure than the country's next prime minister, with the 1849 capitulation of the Hungarian army to the Russians), the merit of the conflict did not consist in a clash between two opposite conceptions of the minority issue but in that between two different strategic views of implementing the same conception.

At the time I am writing this, Hungary faces a similar conflict between the Orbán-government and its opposition, this time on the Yugoslav crisis. Orbán's strategy is to push for a linkage between the post-war Kosovo settlement and a settlement on Voivodina, the latter imagined as combining restoration of territorial autonomy for the province with special rights for the local ethnic (mainly Hungarian) minorities.

His liberal critics agree that autonomy and minority rights are the key for the solution of the minority problem in Voivodina. However, liberals attack the strategy of linkage for two reasons. First, waging war for the Kosovo Albanians and interfering with the sovereignty of the Yugoslav state in dealing with the status of Kosovo was justified, they argue, by extreme violations of international humanitarian law. No comparable emergency situation has been created in Voivodina. Second, by pushing for a linkage, Hungary makes an image of itself as not having participated in the war for its declared aims but for promoting quite different interests. In so doing, liberals claim, it sends a dangerous message not only to nationalists in Serbia but also to possible democratic allies there and in other neighboring countries.

This debate reveals a deeper disagreement between the nationalist and non-nationalist understandings of the policy of minority rights. For non-nationalists, the commitment for such a policy is a matter of principle, a consequence of their more

general commitment for freedom, equality, and individual dignity. Nationalists, on the other hand, adopt the rights-discourse as a matter of tactical accommodation to a status quo, not as a framework for principled settlement. That this is so is confirmed by further evidence. First, the mainstream nationalist conception fails to meet the universalization test. The presence of anti-semitism in the ranks of the nationalist mainstream and its indifference towards the plight of the Romas are symptoms of a lack of willingness to apply the same principles of the minority protection to domestic politics. Second, the nationalist right treats individual human rights with neglect and contempt, and this attitude suggests that, very likely, the right-wing case for minority autonomy, rather than resting the claim of collective rights on individual interests, takes the former as basic and as capable of overruling the latter, should the two conflict with each other.

IV

Is there a chance for the tactical accommodation to give way to principled agreement, or did the evolution of Hungarian nationalism reach the outer limits of its evolution already? That question depends, for an answer, on the future of the relationships of Hungary to the European Union. Hungary is in the group of the post-communist countries which are candidates for admission to the EU in the first round. Should the admission process halt, a reversal in the evolution of Hungarian nationalism will become possible. But if that process comes to a completion in the foreseeable future, the movement towards a principled affirmation of the rights language is likely continue.

Suppose this forecast is not grossly inaccurate - does it provide the thesis of this Rejoinder with any support? Not really, or so it might look at first sight. After all, what the pressure of the EU environment brought about to these days did not amount to more than coming nearer to the multination state conception (and even that as tactical accommodation rather than principled agreement).

But this is not the end of the story. The account given in Section Three deliberately ignored such pro-nationalist authors whose voice is not echoed by the official right. In these circles, the idea that the "Hungarian question" might find a solution in the framework of the EU has been raised already. At least one of the authors I have in mind blames the official Hungarian nationalism for being blind to the fact that,

within the EU, large blocks of state sovereignty are delegated in part upward, and in part downward. Rather than trying to strengthen its central state powers, he claims, Hungary ought to proceed to regionalize its internal administrative structures as quickly as possible so as to facilitate the development of regions across state borders in the future. It is the downgrading of the sovereign state and the upgrading of the regions below it, with a capacity of crosscutting state boundaries, which might bring the problem of the Hungarians close to a solution, he maintains.

Suppose Hungary and its neighbors become members of the EU (which, in its turn, succeeds to overcome the present tensions of integration). In this case, ideas such as the one cited in the above paragraph will find support in the strategic options inherent in the supra-state institutional framework of the Union. This might help these ideas to penetrate the mainstream nationalist right. Should this happen, the Hungarians will be on their way out of the era of nation-building, their preferred ways of uniting politically being based more and more on institutional structures different from and crosscutting/restricting those of the nation-state.