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Politics, Identity, Territory. The "Strength" and "Value" of Nation-State, the Weakness of Regional Challenge

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Introduction

The post Cold War age reveals itself as being characterized mostly by the flourishing of "identity politics". Identitary issues affect the public dimension of collective life and they often develop into economic, legal, political terms. There are many types of collective identity. We would clarify some of them in order to focus the analytical tools that are necessary to face the phenomena we are interested with: national and regional identities. Crucial in our argument are the concept of "political identity" and its "territorial" dimension.

This concept and this dimension consent to compare Nation-State and (sub-national) region as space of collective life, and their "authoritative" degree; they consent to consider the regional claims in front of Nation-State as well as the persistent primacy of the latter as a system structuring "political territory" and the modern democracy. Remind the "deep reasons" of the Nation-State historical success as structuring system of political life helps us to understand its contemporary strength and value in front of the usually weakness of the challenger-region. These reasons deal with the politics of identity, at least as much as with the power and the monopoly of the legitimated use of the force. Moreover, during the international terrorism crisis that exploded on September 11 and the economic crisis of the past few years, the centrality of the Nation-State has forcefully re-emerged: for example, in the economic-financial, military, public-security and migration fields. The Nation-State has once again shown itself to be a solid political construct, as well as being flexible and with abundant resources not readily available to the other sorts of political organization (super-national or sub-national or even ones of other kinds) that compete with it and challenge its political primacy, sometimes seeking to erode its sovereignty. Understanding the factors that underlie the political persistence of the Nation-State requires focusing on the *political* nature of this kind of collective life organization and going beyond its reduction to a pure administrative, legal, and economical apparatus. It also requires addressing the issue of the collective identity and the distinctive political-identitary model which the Nation-State has been able to give itself through a centuries-long process.

According to this subject, this essay will treat the following points: the return of identity politics nowadays (section 1); the concept of collective identity (section 2); the many faces of collective identity (section 3); the relationship among politics, territory and identity, analyzed through the paradigmatic case of Nation-State and national identity (section 4); the structuring of political space between centre and peripheries, where we consider how the dominance of Nation-State model has to face persisting of territorial cleavages (section 5); the case of the regional issue (section 6); the final parts deal with the "strength" and the "value" of Nation-State (sections 7 and 8), and try to show how and why the Nation-State survival and resurgence are linked with the identitary-territorial dimension of politics that still characterizes contemporary world.

1. The flourishing of identity politics today

1989 marked the demise and the de-freezing of the geopolitical structure characteristic of the "Cold War" period. Some view 1989 as the end of the "short century" [Hobsbawm 1994], others link that date to the beginning of the globalization era [see e.g. Beck 1997], while yet others view globalization as the "end of history" [Fukuyama 1992]. Interpreted in this way, 1989 was a misunderstanding (an illusion to some, a nightmare to others).

On looking beyond the ideological pretensions of neo-liberalism[1], we see that the waning of communism, the liberalization of the exchange economy, and the revolution in communication technologies, have not unified the world; nor have they homogenised the patterns and practices of social and political life. And history continues to move forward. It does so for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the presumed integration of economic and political systems and the uniformity of cultural patterns, as well of ideological and religious attitudes, have mostly involved the West, to which other areas of the world have remained alien or hostile (East, South and especially the partially

[1] For a brief description of neoliberalism and its success see Lee Mudge [2008]; for a more critical point of view see Harvey [2005].

territorialized Islamic world) [see Barber 1995; Huntington 1996]. Secondly, the West's tendency towards globalization within its own borders combines with a tendency towards "fragmentation" [see e. g. Clark 1997], with a post-modern localism or even the persistence of a traditional localism [see Sassen 2007]. In the post-1989 world the drives for fragmentation manifest themselves in a variety of processes: social-economic and cultural diversification, territorial localization of corporations and global circuits of techno-communications, continuous political and territorial fragmentation and re-composition (on inter-State, intra-State and cross-border levels). Federalism, regionalism, secessionism, communitarianism, nationalism and micro-nationalism (often of a religious or ethnic nature): these notions, in different ways, describe a world that is neither unified nor kept in peace by the action of a new global order; they instead characterize a divided world in which unrest is overt, sometimes violent sometimes simmering. Finally, the opposing dynamics of globalization and fragmentation "put history on the move again" and prove to be sources of tension for the Nation-State – that is, for the model and experience of political-cultural organization that has been the absolute protagonist on the historical stage for the centuries since the beginning of the modern age. The Nation-State established itself as the primary spatial delimitation and institutional regulation system for internal and international processes regarding economic, power, legitimization and collective belonging. Globalization and fragmentation both challenge this fundamental pillar of Western modernity. But instead of being dead or obsolete, the Nation-State has reacted robustly to such super-national and sub-national pressures[2].

Within this framework, the "post-cold war age" is characterized mostly by the flourishing of "identity politics" [see Touraine 1997; Castells 1997; Maalouf 1998; Friedman 1999; Girad 2001; Benhabib 2002; Apter 2003; Bauman 2003; Hall 2008; Todorov 2008; Moisi 2009; Ollivier 2009]. The identification of an individual with one group rather than another, self- and hetero-recognition of collective identities, identity opposition between

[2] This is also recognized by an analysis in many respects critical of the continuing centrality of the Nation-State in the contemporary age: see Sassen [2007].

groups: these are the main factors that fill politics with "identitary issues" in the modern and "post-modern" world. As has been argued, in the contemporary world it is group identity that counts most: the country, the religious or ethnic group, the race, the "nation of sexual preferences" [see Friedman 1999].

In its collective manifestation, the "identitary fact" assumes forms that are micro as well as macro-social, pacific as well as violent. Today identitary politics involves, for example, gender distinction policies or the rights of homosexuals, redefinition of "couple", "family", parent (father, mother), the treatment of minorities, or legislation on sensitive issues concerning ethics and religion (assisted procreation, euthanasia, the cloning of human cells). They also concern the definition and defense of the "local cultures" included or excluded from citizenship, the inter-ethnic or multiculturalist relations on communitarian bases, the universalism of human rights, globalism, Occidentalism, Islamism, laicism, patriotism, economic protectionism; or, again, the ethnic and religious conflicts, the "ethnic cleaning", the "clash of civilizations", the humanitarian interventions, and so on. The importance of "identity" can be explained by the fact that identitary questions do not have only a historical-literary importance, perhaps of interest to a cultured elite: they have existential and social reverberations on the everyday lives of both individuals, groups and institutions. Identitary issues affect the public dimension of collective life and they often develop into economic, legal, political questions. The identity issue, in particular as regards collective identity, has become increasingly important for policy-makers [see Friedman 1999].

In recent years, in particular, the "brave new world" which many analysts envisaged after 1989[3] has became somewhat obsolete because of the rise of identity politics (or the identitary dimension of politics). The vision of a peaceful and harmonic world collapsed, lastly, with the September 11 attacks, the wars against the Taliban in Afghanistan and against Saddam Hussein in Iraq, or it slid into destructive international financial crises and

[3] In Kissinger view, instead, it has been the spread of international terrorism and the wars of the beginning of the twenty-first century to mark the end of the international system born with the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. See H. Kissinger, interview, "*La Stampa*", 8 may 2003.

their social consequences, into anti- or new-global movement protests. The presumed primacy of the functional dimension has declined. In this context, it is to consider with attention the idea that the problems of collective life are no longer reducible to technical, economic or legal problems. Politics and its identitary rootedness have returned. To better understand such developments, that is contemporary politics and our social life, political and social sciences have to drive their attention to the "political culture" dimension of the society. As it will become clear in the following pages, this essays is a theoretical and interpretative contribution in this direction.

Actually, the image of a "new world" unified and pacified on the basis of the primacy of economic principles of free global trade, juridical globalism and the universalism of human rights was criticized as soon as it emerged from the fall of the Berlin Wall [see Dahrendorf, Furet, Geremek 1992; Brzezinski 1993]. In particular, Samuel Huntington's well-known thesis expressed more forcefully than others a different interpretation of the principles regulating politics and the international system after the Cold War[4]. But Huntington's thesis has often been discussed from partial or equivocal points of view. Its critics and supporters have mainly discussed the persuasiveness of the claim that it is the destiny of civilizations to conflict with each other; or the plausibility of the contention that one civilization (especially the Western one) is superior to others. The more convincing arguments provided by Huntington are instead different, and more sophisticated.

First, the idea that the world cannot be considered "unified" according to any regulating principle (neither economic, legal, ideological, cultural, religious nor political); or rather the idea that one unique "universal" civilization does not exist: history and the contemporary world exhibit the existence of a variety of "particular" civilities. The conception of "civility" (in the singular) is typical of a certain vocation to universalism that characterizes Western civilisation; but it has several factual limitations and gives

[4] See Huntington 1996. Huntington's thesis obtained great public resonance after the 2001 Islamist terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York and the subsequent ones in London and Madrid (to refer only to Europe). In the meantime criticisms of Huntington's have increased. See e.g. Courbage, Todd [2007]; Appiah [2006].

rise to ethical-political risks or paradoxes (especially when a "civilizing mission" encounters the resistance of those who are to be civilized)[5]. An important consequence of the "clash of civilizations" thesis is that value systems, social practices, and institutions extraneous to a certain civilization are not to be classified as barbaric. From this point of view Huntington proposes a vision which important currents of classical European liberalism used to embrace. He reformulates, in his own way, the Weberian thesis of "values polytheism" and opposes it to that of "values monotheism". The possibility of a "clash of civilizations" should be located and interpreted within the conceptual framework of this "conflict among values"[6]. Moreover, it does not necessarily imply "values relativism", nor does it necessarily exclude the possibility of a "dialogue among civilizations" as well as confrontation between values.

Secondly, and most importantly, Huntington stresses that a dimension which many observers used to consider residual is today imposing itself to structure the cleavages and the regulatory principles of contemporary politics: the cultural or identitary (often religious) dimension. "The central theme of this book", Huntington writes, "is that culture and cultural identities, which at the broadest level are civilization identities, are shaping the pattern of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world"[7].

This re-definition of the divisional lines and regulation principles, from an economic-functional to a cultural-identitary level, has created a new context for international system dynamics, for the European integration process, and for political life itself within the Nation-States. It is no accident that the 1990s witnessed the maturation first, and the weakening thereafter, of the logic of "governance without government" at an international

[5] This issue has been discussed, from different points of view, by Berger, Berger, Kellner [1973]; Todorov [1989]; Walzer [1991].

[6] During the twentieth century, this conception was thematized in masterly and dramatic manner by Weber. See also Schmitt [1967]. But it was thereafter formulated also outside continental European thought: for instance in the political philosophy of Berlin [1969]; Walzer [1977]; Hampshire [2000]. On the debate sparked by the events of 11 September 2001, see the interesting Various Authors [2002].

[7] Huntington [1996, 20]. For a similar (though less dramatic) interpretation see Smith [1995].

and intra-national level inspired by relational criteria of an economic-functional[8].

Moreover, during the international terrorism crisis that exploded on September 11 and the economic crisis exploded over the past few years, the centrality of the Nation-State has forcefully re-emerged: for example, in the economic-financial, military, public-security and migration fields. The Nation-State has once again shown itself to be a solid political construct, as well as being flexible and with abundant resources not readily available to the other sorts of political organization (super-national or sub-national or even ones of other kinds) that compete with it and challenge its political primacy, sometimes seeking to erode its sovereignty. Understanding the factors that underlie the political persistence of the Nation-State requires focusing on the political nature of this kind of collective life organization and going beyond its reduction to a pure administrative, legal, and economical apparatus. It also requires addressing the issue of the collective identity and the distinctive political-identitary model which the Nation-State has been able to give itself through a centuries-long process.

In this framework, the issue of national identity is flanked by that of regional identity: these are the two types of collective identity that are examined here[9]. But first necessary is brief discussion on the concept of collective identity.

2. *On the concept of collective identity: for a re-definition beyond misunderstanding*

The concept of identity refers in the first place to a feeling and a consciousness of a self that remains itself in face of others and notwithstanding change. The formation of identity depends on

[8] This logic and these criteria, for example, had driven the process of European integration according to the "Maastricht model". But they revealed their shortcomings at the political level (characterized by goals and demands connected with identity). See Nevola [2007a]. On the logic of "governance without government" see Rosenau, Czempiel [1992].

[9] Within the frame of the hypothesis of "super-national" European integration process, the issue of national identity is also flanked by that of European identity. See Nevola [2007a].

intricate processes of self-recognition and hetero-recognition. Identity, in different words, consists in the form and content of the answers to questions like "who am I?" "Who are you?" "Who is he/she?" In all these cases we talk, more precisely, about "individual identity" – even if it has public or social connotations.

However, "we also can, and do, identify ourselves in terms that go beyond the self, that link the self with some other entity or group". In this second case, "Identity for most of us means being part of a group"[10]. The concept of "collective identity" refers to this phenomenon[11]. A collective identity reflects the sense of belonging to a group, where groups are variable by nature, size or other features[12]. The contemporary social sciences pay particular attention to the themes of collective identity and identity politics[13]. Although the expression "collective identity" has became familiar even in everyday language, in the social sciences its meaning is disputed – at both the explanatory and normative levels[14]. The concept has sometimes been radically questioned in cases where it is referred to an extensive "social group", such as the one that we call "society"[15]. According to more moderate critics, however, the concept of collective identity may be appropriate, at most, for traditional societies characterized – in the current view – by a *status of stasis*, or by slow and imperceptible social change[16]. In this case, moreover, the collective identity is perceived in "essentialist" terms as a typically closed, rigid, exclusive identity. In modern and industrial, post-modern or post-

[10] The quotations are from Friedman [1999, 3].

[11] To be emphasised is that the collective identity is constitutive of individual identity. This idea, widespread in the sociological and philosophical tradition, has been relaunched in the past thirty years by neo-communitarian political theory. See e.g. Taylor [1989; 1991]; MacIntyre [1981]; Sandel [1982; 2009]. For a sociological point of view see Bellah *et al.* [1985]; Seligman [2000]. For a brief survey Nevola [2010].

[12] As in the cases, to cite not the usual ones, of religious sects, groups of football team fans, groups of animal rights or vegetarian activists, the families of Mafia victims, mothers of desaparecidoses, homosexuals, feminists, etc.

[13] As recently illustrated by e.g. Rost, Stoelting [2005]; Rost [2005].

[14] These controversies have arisen mainly in sociological theory and anthropology. For a survey of the main issues see Gordon, Gergen [1968]; Sciolla [1983]; Rusconi [1984]; Pollini [1987]. See also Goffman [1961]; Levi-Strauss [1977]; Pizzorno [1977]; Gallino [1982]; Melucci [1982]; Barbano [1983]; Bellah *et al.* [1985]; for more recent developments see Assmann [1992]; Eisenstadt [1993]; Martin [1995]; Castells [1997]; Dubar [2000]; Seligman [2000]; Sciolla [2007]; in more political terms de Benoit [2005]; Baechler [2011].

[15] This, for example, is the criticism made by Berger, Luckmann [1966].

[16] As exemplified by Claude Lévi-Strauss's "cold societies".

industrial societies, these identificationary features are regarded as being in constant decline. The consequence, on a theoretical level, of these historical transformations of society should be the uselessness of "identity language" for the understanding of social, cultural and political phenomena in the contemporary world. A similar argument has been put forward by Alain Touraine when he argues, for example, that "the strength of a society seems to increase in line with the slowness of its change and with the ability to reproduce its behavioural codes exactly. When we consider the most industrialized societies, we may even doubt the utility of the notion "society". We think that such a notion implies the existence of a unity and an identity which we can no longer find in the reality we are observing". From this it follows, according to Touraine, that "Nowadays… we must get rid of the idea of society and, consequently, get rid of any identitary representation of social life, recognizing that social reality is nowhere near an expression of an essence, an esprit, a will, and that it is nothing other than a fragile outcome, only partially coherent and constantly changing, of an ensemble of social relational networks and networks based on dominance, influence and authority, and which imply conflicts, compromises and deviations" [Touraine 1983, 157 and 157-58; see also Touraine 1992; 1997].

On these bases it has been denied that the collective identity is a relevant topic for social sciences or a resource for the democratic societies of our time, and argued that when collective identity re-emerges it is a threat to integration and the functioning of democracy. From this perspective the return of collective identities is criticized as a regressive, anachronistic or residual phenomenon, as an "identity populism" characterized by a strong and noxious introduction of "emotive tension" into political questions – as happens, for example, with immigration, patriotism, micro-nationalism, regional separatism, or religious fundamentalism [see Laplantine 1999; Luverà 1999; Remotti 2001; 2010; Azzariti 2005; Sen 2006].

This rejection of "identity language", I believe, raises numerous doubts and seems generally unconvincing. My counter-argument is based on two main considerations. The first is empirical and entails the intellectual duty of taking the persistence of identitary phenomena for granted; the second consideration is

theoretical-conceptual and suggests that a conception of collective identity different from the current one is possible[17]. In regard to the first point I reiterate the observations made in the previous section. I shall therefore dwell on the second point.

A collective identity should not necessarily be understood in "essentialist", naturalist and monolithic terms[18]. It can be conceived as flexible, relational, and open to change and to confrontation with "alterity". This last conception of collective identity proves useful for the analysis of contemporary society and, under some conditions, coherent with the ethical-political values of present-day democracy. To delineate this conception of collective identity we can draw on some of Jürgen Habermas's ideas concerning the "complex societies" of the contemporary world. A critical revision of them in regard to certain important questions can be useful in re-formulating the notion of collective identity in light of the theme of interest here.

In an important essay concerning collective identity, Habermas explicitly posits a "language of identities" alongside the "complex societies" of our time: that is to say, the modern or post-modern societies [see Habermas 1974]. For this reason he passes positive judgement on the use of the collective identity concept by referring to a large ensemble of individuals (as a society), and not just to the social identity of the single individuals that form it. The category of "complex societies" obviously also includes the liberal-democratic, pluralistic, dynamic and secularized societies of our time; besides, the traditional or "cold" societies, characterized by immobilization or by a low level of change, are certainly not the ones for which social sciences in the 1970s used with insistence the paradigm of complexity.

On this basis, Habermas emphasises first that a complex society produces its identity in a peculiar way and the maintaining or losing of it depends on the society itself [see Habermas 1974]. This argument, developed within the framework of Habermas's theory of "communicative action" [see Habermas 1981; 1992], is

[17] I have written elsewhere on normative aspects concerning the political issues of "identity reasons" and the "need for collective identity". See Nevola [1997a; 2003a; 2003d; 2006; 2007a; 2007b].

[18] For a typology of conceptions of collective identity see Rost, Stoelting [2005]; Rost [2005].

interesting because it states that the "collective identity" is not a "natural entity", an "essence" that is given in nature and definitively so (although in some circumstances it can be "represented" as natural)[19]: it is instead a "product", a "social construct". The fact that an identity is "constructed" or "invented" does not mean, however, that the identity "does not exist", that it is not a "social reality"[20]: once constructed or invented it "exists" as its social, cultural, political effects. "Artificial" does not mean "unreal"[21]. Neither does it follow that such an identity is constructible or modifiable, or that it can be planned freely, as some studies on the topic suggest. A collective identity, in fact, is not simply the direct product of actions that are intentional, rational and transparent (individual or collective). It is instead the consequence of a blend of social interactions (intentional and unintentional), of their social and historical sedimentation and condensation, of their "objectification" – according to a view in which "methodological holism" helps "methodological individualism"[22]. Within this interpretative framework it makes sense, in my view, to argue that a collective identity is "a variable product of collective action"[23].

Secondly, Habermas's conception clarifies the problem of the "maintenance" of a collective identity, and it addresses the

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[19] This does not gainsay the importance of the "naturalistic" conception of collective identity. At the level of political culture, or as Bordieu [1996; 2000] puts it, the "political field", this "naturalistic" representation of a collective identity has in fact a political-strategic purpose: the actors concerned deliberately pursue instrumental ends, thus giving it "existence". This is a socio-cultural and political phenomenon widely analysed in the social and political sciences. See e.g. Nevola [1998]; Rost [2005]; Rost, Stoelting [2005].

[20] This thesis is especially (but not only) widespread in the "post-modern" social sciences. See e.g. Brubaker [1996]. But it can be easily rejected by drawing, for instance, on the classic sociological theory of Weber and Durkheim and their conceptions, respectively, of "culture" and "social representations".

[21] See, to give just one example, the case of the Mohicans of New England, cited by Kertzer [1988].

[22] For analyses of this problem in the theory of society see Winch [1958]; Berger, Luckmann [1966]; Habermas [1974]; Eisenstadt [1993]; in the theory of national identity, Smith [1986]. On these aspects twentieth-century social sciences and philosophy have often argued convincingly, with concepts such as "social fact" (Émile Durkheim), "institutionalization" (Max Weber); "form" (Georg Simmel); "self-fulfilling prophecy" (William Thomas), "language games" (Ludwig Wittgenstein), "objectivation" (Arnold Gehlen); "typification" (Alfred Schütz).

[23] On collective identity as the variable outcome of collective action see e.g. Calhoun [1991].

problem of change. Success in combining the problem of maintenance with that of change in a collective identity is decisive for the conception of collective identity of interest here. As in the case of the individual identity, Habermas maintains, we can define an identity as "collective" (and we can consequently affirm that its formation process has succeeded) if it is able to solve the problems linked to maintenance amid radical changes that involve its structure and its context. In sum, a "successful" collective identity is one that enables a society (a "human group") to remain itself despite change. As a "social construct" and because it "maintains itself amid change", the collective identity is understood by Habermas as resulting from communicative and reflexive (and self-reflexive) processes of "critical learning": in contemporary society identity is possible only in a "reflexive form" founded on the awareness of having "equal and general chances" to take part in communication processes; in these communication processes the identity's formation takes place as a continuous "learning process" [see Habermas 1974]. According to Habermas, in particular, the reflexive and communicative process is constituted by a texture of social relations that are normatively structured and dialogically oriented, and these relations give rise to what he calls "rational identity".

Finally, this collective identity, produced and maintained reflexively and communicatively, has evidently no need to rely on "fixed contents". And yet, as Habermas himself admits, it cannot rest on nothing. In fact "it needs to get contents", these being the materials on which the reflexive and communicative processes draw when they generate a collective identity [see Habermas 1974; 2005] (also with *selective* modalities, I would add)[24].

This conception of collective identity, though is not free of ambiguity or weakness, it is fruitful in many respects; in particular because it combines, in its own way, two models often treated as alternative or opposing patterns of collective identity formation: identities seen as socially constructed artefacts and identities seen

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[24] An important part in this process is played by the mechanisms of the (collective) memory and a collectivity's relationship with its history, including the so-called "politics of history". See Ricoeur [2000]; Assmann [1992]; Zerubavel [2003]; as well as the classic studies by Halbwachs [1925; 1950].

as precipitated by the sharing of experiences and memories[25]. But in a certain respect that is of importance to us here, Habermas's conception seems to be problematic and fragile: particularly in its definition of the *logic* that underlies the formation, maintenance and change of the collective identity of a society or human group. Habermas, in fact, conceives such processes and their logic of action as relational networks that are merely communicative and dialogical-consensual. He considers the formation, maintenance and change of collective identity processes to be based on some "authenticity" principle or logic whereby a genuine collective will expresses itself. In the end, he maintains, this collective will coincides with the image of "civil society" and with the idea of "deliberative democracy" supposedly extraneous to, or protected against, the logics (and institutions) of power and manipulation[26].

The objections that can be raised against this conception are that, on the one hand, power and manipulation are themselves "communicative"; and, on the other, that relational networks and social communication processes are intimately constituted *also* by strategic factors and conflict dynamics: that is, by logics of power and manipulation[27]. In others words, logics of power and manipulation are two physiological elements of communication. Consequently, the processes that generate collective identity cannot be extraneous to power and manipulation. Arguing that collective identities are *socially built* by communicative and reflexive means should not induce us forget that manipulation, violence and instrumentality are generally and "physiologically" present within social relation systems, and within everyday communication both private and public. Specifically, these elements are intrinsic to the processes whereby a collective identity is formed, maintained and changed. This entails recognition of the *political* nature of the mechanisms that culturally

[25] This distinction is taken from Smith [1995].

[26] The most updated and mature version of this Habermasian conception, which seeks to remedy the shortcomings of the previous one, is in Habermas [1992]. Of course, the weaknesses in Habermas's theory that I have summarized here are most apparent when his "discourse" moves from the ethical-normative philosophical level to the sociopolitical-empirical one. For a critical analysis of the ideal vision of civil society see Nevola [2003b].

[27] See Rusconi [1984]; Nevola [1994b]. On the logic of political manipulation see Riker [1986] and, with closer reference to the symbolic dimension, Edelman [1976]; Kertzer [1988].

structure collective identities[28]. The reference to power, in particular, besides being unavoidable when discussing the formation, maintenance and change of a collective identity, makes it possible to grasp basic aspects of the distinction between *cultural* and *political* identity. I shall return to this point later. For the time being, I shall continue with discussion of the general concept of collective identity.

A collective identity concerns how we define ourselves: "who we are" and "who we are not". The definition of "us" always implies reference to (and comparison with) "others"[29]. The identity principle is indivisible from the otherness principle: there is an "us" because there is a "them" or a "you". Human beings organize their lives on the basis of groupings (in the plural) defined by highly diverse features (religion, habits, rules, territory, descendance, language, etc.). Historically one "single large human group" has never existed, and it is very unlikely that one will exist in the future[30]. The collective identity of a group entails the existence of a "plurality of groups", or better recognition of "diversity" and the consequent recognition of the differences among groups (any nature or value could be attributed to this diversity). It does not mean that, in principle, it is impossible to talk about "human identity", referring, for example, to the "human condition", "human rights", "universal values", "equality among humans", or to Kant's "cosmopolitanism". The relevant point is that such notions are insufficient to understand and explain how the collective and *political* life of humans – including its ideal-normative dimension – is *really* organized and how it works[31].

The fact that a collective identity constitutes itself by contrast and difference *vis-à-vis* an Other signifies that a group has an

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[28] For a discussion of these aspects see Nevola [1990; 1998].

[29] Although formulated in a different context and in terms of a radical opposition, Carl Schmitt's (primarly existential more than political) us/them dichotomy is still an important contribution on the theme. See Schmitt [1927]; see also Freund [1995]; Mouffe [2005]. Ackerman [2004] has recently returned to the "existential" dimension of politics.

[30] Lemberg [1964] has rightly emphasised this aspect.

[31] I would add that the tension between tendencies to the "particularism" and tendencies to the "universalism" of identities is inscribed in history and human culture. It is an essential feature of European and Western modernity – as Berlin [1990] showed with the image of the dialectic between Enlightenment and Romanticism. More in general see also Walzer [1991]; Todorov [1989]; Taguieff [1987]; Sternhell [2006]; Jullien [2008].

"inside-oriented identity" and an "outside-oriented otherness". This aspect of identity should not be misunderstood or trivialized. Firstly, it does not imply that a particular group is totally homogenized or integrally characterized by "absolute affinity", or characterized only by identity-homogeneity: differences and the consequent plurality are not excluded; they are instead typically present within groups. Secondly, and analogously, such an argument does not imply that a particular group is characterized by absolute extraneousness towards other groups, or characterized only by diversity-heterogeneity: shared features and inter-group communication are not excluded; indeed, they are typically present[32]. In other words, groups define their collective identities on the basis of internal identity elements as well as differences from external others; but a group's identity is usually defined also by internal variety and pluralism and by openness to the outside. My argument therefore rests on the concepts of *intra-group "relative affinity"* and *inter-group "relative otherness"*. The former refers to the element that prevails within the group; the latter to the element that prevails towards the outside of the group: intra-group affinity is *perceived* (by the subjects involved or by an external observer) as stronger than inter-group affinity; inter-group otherness is *perceived* as stronger than the intra-group one. The affinity and extraneousness factors may also vary in their nature and contents as may also vary in the extent of the groups[33].

The *identitary system of affinity-extraneousness* is clearly inter-subjective; but it can be seen, both by actors and observers, under an "objectivistic" light (as a "social fact", *à la* Durkheim) and/or under a "subjective" light (as a subjective intention that gives sense to social action, *à la* Weber). The affinity-extraneousness identitary system entails "self-identification"[34] as "hetero-

[32] See e.g. Lévi-Strauss [1977]. For a classic sociological analysis of the social relation of "otherness" see Znaniecki [1930-31]. Useful political analyses are Horowitz [1985]; Kellas [1991]; Linz [1995].

[33] National identity is a paradigmatic case exemplifying the dimensions (economic, cultural, political, historical, etc.) around which a collective identity forms. The point has been treated widely in the sociological and political science literature on the topic since the classic theories of Ernst Renan and Max Weber.

[34] As M. Rainer Lepsius has written, "The premise for the development of an identity is the existence of an object that regards itself as a unit, distinct from others, and which self-defines itself on this basis". [Lepsius 1997, 3]. However, Lepsius fails to emphasise the crucial factor of hetero-identification.

identification". In regard to self-identification, the (*relative*) affinity of a group means that its members *a)* have something in common; *b)* are aware that they have something in common; *c)* are aware that one of the things that they have in common is membership of the group (belief and sense of belonging and reciprocal recognition). Likewise in regard to hetero-identification, the (*relative*) affinity of a group means that its members are recognized by other groups' members as *a)* having something in common; *b)* being aware of having something in common; *c)* being aware that one of the things that they have in common is belonging to the group. On both the self-identification and hetero-identification levels, it is the third aspect (the belief and sense of belonging) that predominates in the definition of a group and its collective identity[35]. No less important is that none of the three above aspects should be considered a fixed starting-point for, or a "natural" feature of, the collective identity. Instead, they all represent stakes and possible landings in the (relational, communicative and reflexive) processes by which identities are formed, and in the (political) struggle for identitary recognition[36].

Redefined thus, collective identities "exist" even in contemporary developed society – although they are often characterized as dynamic, fluid, context-bound, relational, negotiated, contested, and reflexive, constantly built and re-built, and with problematic borders [see Shore 1993]. They are "belief objects", "networks of symbolic acts" [see Taguieff 1995a].

[35] However, more generally, in the theoretical scheme of political unification, the dimensions of "identity/membership" and "power/command" are of equal importance for political unification: see Nevola [2007a]. A different position is taken, for instance, by Michael Walzer, who tends to give priority to the former: "The primary good that we distribute to one another is membership in some human community. And what we do with regard to membership structures all our other distributive choices: it determines with whom we will make those choices, from whom we require obedience and collect taxes, to whom we allocate goods and services". Again: "Admission and exclusion are the core of communal independence. They suggest the deepest meaning of self-determination. Without them, there could not be *communities of character*, historical stable, ongoing associations of men and women with some special commitment to one other and some special sense of their common life" [Walzer 1983, 41 and 70]. Here I merely point out that the structuring of a political identity also entails a structuring of intra-group and inter-group power.

[36] On the "struggle for recognition" see Taylor [1992]; Honneth [1992]; Habermas [1993]; Ricour [2000]. See also Pizzorno [1977]; Rusconi [1984]; Nevola [1990].

3. The numerous faces of collective identity

The above-suggested concept of collective identity should be specified. Collective identity comes in many guises; that is, it has many faces. Some of them should be clarified, albeit with no claim to systematicity or exhaustiveness: for the aim here is instead to focus selectively on the analytical tools needed to interpret the social phenomena of interest: national and regional identity.

A) A collective identity is *cultural* (or ethno-cultural) when a group's self- and hetero-identification is based on a series of elements which we normally recognize as cultural: language, literary and artistic tradition, habits, rules of social behaviour, religion, historical memory, various beliefs, myths, rites, symbols, etc.

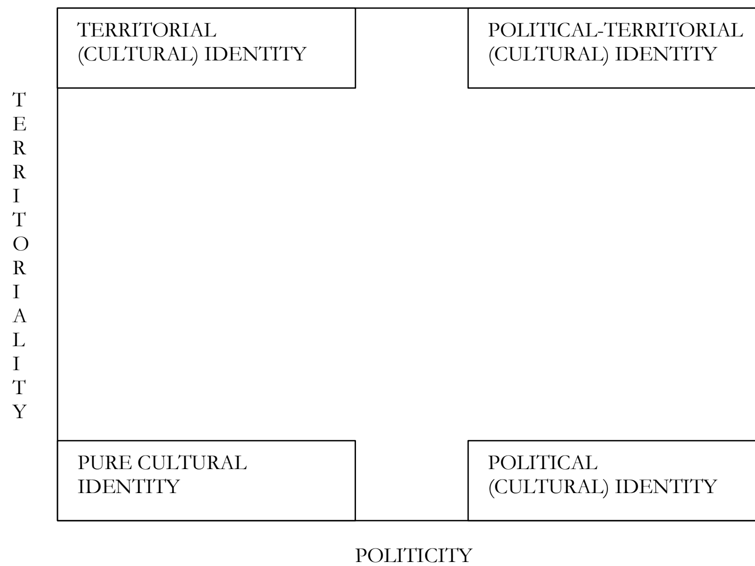
B) In some cases these identitary elements are shared by a group within a delimited territory. Owing to its material, historical and symbolic features, this territory become another factor giving shape and content to the collective identity. Space becomes the object of collective learning, appropriation and feeling. It becomes a place dense with historical and symbolic meanings; a space that hosts and nourishes the identitary roots of a group and gives structure to a privileged "communicative field". Space and time (and culture) meet and merge within this face of collective identity consisting in *territorial* identity.

C) Finally, a collective identity acquires its guise as *political* identity when the following conditions are satisfied: *i)* the elements that give shape and content to a cultural type of collective identity ("territorialized" or otherwise) are sustained by power structures and instruments shared by a group; *ii)* this group must recognize itself, and be recognized, as having an explicit and shared "command chain" that imposes decisions, choices, and sanctions that are authoritative and binding *erga omnes* within the group; *iii)* the group must decide not to tolerate interference (from outside by other groups) in its self-organization of collective public life, except interferences which a group allows. This means that political identity centres on "force" and produces the "compulsory" attitudes and behaviours ("political obligations") [see Tussman 1960; Pitkin 1965-1966; Walzer 1970; Flatman 1972; Pateman 1979; Beran 1987] which the group's members recognize

as "legitimate duties" towards the community to which they belong. These are loyalty attitudes and behaviours[37] whose purpose is to defend the group's integrity, well-being and survival when it is subject to threats or problems arising from within or without.

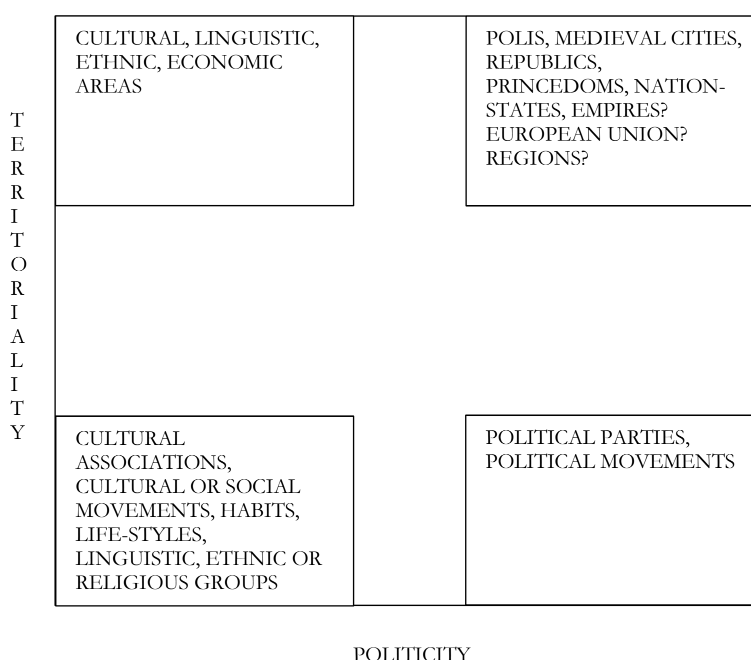
Every collective identity is necessarily a cultural identity; but it is not necessarily a territorial or political one. Hence a territorial kind of identity has a cultural face but not always a political one; likewise, a political kind of identity always has a cultural face but not always a territorial one. We may accordingly construct a simple typology of collective identities that starts from cultural identity and develops through the two dimensions of identitary territoriality and politicity. Some ideal-typical forms of collective identity emerge from this typology (see schema 1 and schema 2).

Schema 1. Tipology of collective identities



[37] On the concept of loyalty in a political community see Grodzins [1956].

Schema 2. Some examples of identitary phenomena from the typology



The existence of this variety of identitary forms and the fact that they do not exclude each other (so that the members of a group and the group itself may have many types of identity) raises the question of whether a "multiple identity" is possible, and also of whether the different types of identity all have the same weight. In recent years the notion of a multiple identity has gained much importance in social science debates, and it has been often cited to relativize the value of the Nation-State as an identitary model on a descriptive, explanatory or prescriptive level. I cannot discuss the question in its entirety here, but some considerations about the shortcomings of the multiple identity perspective are necessary.

First consideration. It should be borne in mind that the notion of multiple identity refers properly to the social identity of single individuals, not to the collective identity of a group considered as a whole. In this regard, the supporters of the multiple identity

thesis often undervalue the difference, in nature and implications, between the individual dimension of identity (the identity of an individual, included her/his social aspects) and the collective dimension of identity (the identity of a group), reaching conclusions (mostly in an implicit way) about the latter by taking characteristics of the former. They thus produce a conceptual short-circuit that leads, in the best scenario, to a view of "collectiveness" as the "sum of single individualities". The principal *corpus* of sociological tradition and fundamental trends in political theory oppose this conceptual drift (which has a liberalistic, individualistic or postmodernist matrix) with solid arguments both theoretical and empirical [see e. g. Bellah *et al.* 1985]. Let us now focus on the concept of multiple identity. According to Anthony Smith, the fundamental reason why an individual is the pertinent referent for the multiple identity is that "individual identity" can often be multiple because it is often "situational": "human beings have multiple identities – of family, gender, class, religion, ethnic and nation – with one or other at different time taking precedence over others, depending on many circumstances". Collective identity is a "pervasive" type of identity because at a collective level "is not the options and feelings of individuals that matter, but the nature of the collective bonds" [Smith 1995, 123 and 124; see also Habeas 1996]. The "pervasiveness" of collective identity depends on the nature of the common bond. The nature of this bond can be described by reformulating a classic idea: the collective identity of a group is not the sum of its members identities. In accordance with Durkheim's sociological theory, Smith views collective identity as a "social fact": collective identity becomes "objective", enveloping, external and "coercive" for the individual, and this is the result of a socialization and communication process [see also Berger, Luckmann 1966].

This Smith's argument helps in underlying, on the one hand, the difference between individual and collective identity; and on the other, the fact that the consistency and characteristics of a collective identity cannot be deduced from the pure sum of a multitude of individual actors (as we would deduce from an ingenuous use and interpretation of public opinion surveys). It is within this scheme that Smith modulates and specifies the *nature*

of the common collective identitary bond. But there is another point to emphasise concerning the multiple identity; and dealing with it can usefully draw on further passages of Smith's analysis.

Second consideration. To be emphasised is that the argument for a multiple identity proves very weak precisely in circumstances where the identitary question is decisive: for example, when the different spheres of wide-range or territorial identity (regional, national or European) are in tension with each other, or when collective loyalty is demanded (as usually happens in critical situations like economic crises, a lack of resources, migratory waves, or wars). In situations like these, a problem in the "management of multiple identities" arises, not just at an individual level but at a collective one as well. This observation suffices to show that the multiple identity concept should not become an easy rhetorical device with which to hide the distinctive and exigent nature of a political type of collective identity (like the one typically associated with the Nation-State). This last consideration highlights another problematic aspect which the multiple identity thesis undervalues: if every individual is able to cumulate a multiplicity of identities, what are the relations among these different identities? Do multiple identities have the same capacity to "envelop" and "involve" the individuals? What factors play a role in this context? Smith, for example, poses the question as follows: "Theoretically ... it would be perfectly possible for the people of Europe to feel that they had more than one collective cultural identity: to feel themselves Sicilian, Italian and European or Flemish, Belgian and European (as well as being female, middle class, Muslim or whatever). At the same time, it should also be asked: what is the relative strength of these 'concentric circles of allegiance'? Which of these circles is politically decisive, which has most effect on people's day-to-day lives? And which of these cultural identities and loyalties is likely to be more durable and pervasive?" [Smith 1995, 124]. Smith gives clear answers to these questions: as in the past so today, the national collective identity still predominates [see e. g. also Thiesse 1999; Haller 2003]. Smith is likewise unequivocal in identifying the factor that, even in the case of multiple identities, makes the national identity prevail: it is, once again, culture. More precisely, the deep-lying and "mythical" dimension of a culture that works

as a *mythomoteur*, that symbolically transforms collective experiences into common values for a people (and thus forms its collective identity) [see Smith 1986].

Smith's proposed solution for the problems concerning the multiple identity thesis is convincing as regards the supremacy of national identity among other extensive and territorial identities, but not as regards explanation of the prominence of culture. In this regard, I merely point out that this analysis is incomplete because it is oriented only to the *cultural* collective identity and neglects the importance of a *political* collective identity. But the political dimension of collective identity is essential when discussing the problem of multiple identities and their weight in public life. Indeed, when we more generally consider the historical formation processes (maintenance and change) of collective identities, the dimensions of identity *politics*, *political* culture and *political* socialization are extremely important[38]. The prominence of the political dimension of a collective identity is linked to the political bonds (loyalty and obligation) that define self- and hetero-recognition by a group as *political* collectiveness in the sense defined earlier.

I have elsewhere sought to delineate a theory of political unification [see Nevola 2007a]. This theory highlights that a collective identity needs "force" if it is to be a resource for the "political unification" of a community; in other words it must be backed by power structures and instruments that bind belonging and translate identity into loyalty. Only under these conditions can a potential political (authoritative) system pass the "political unification test". In other words, the test verifies in this case the availability of a political identity and determines the collective loyalty (both "vertical" and "horizontal") that consists in the ability to set the "common bond" as binding (political obligation). My argument concerning national/regional identity is that is only under these conditions, and at this level, that the political-

[38] Reference to the identitary model of the Nation-State is illuminating in this regard; not so much in its specificity as a historical phenomenon and a particular form of political unity, but rather insofar as it helps give salience to the general and typical conditions that have produced a variety of empirical cases and a successful historical model. For a preliminary discussion see Nevola [2001a; 2007c].On the concept of political identity see e. g. Mac Kenzie [1978].

identitary primacy of the Nation-State has historically manifested itself and continues to do so today. This kind of political unity, which was built in Europe by structuring/delimiting the political space over many waves between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries[39], represents better than any other identitary system the bonds and meanings of political obligation. This kind of political unification had success also in facing the regional identitary challenges and claims.

At this point it is possible to suggest a summary definition of territorial-political (and necessarily also cultural) identity that combines the elements mentioned above. A collective identity is *political* and it expresses group loyalty (political obligation) because it is based on individuals' sense of belonging to the same group, a belonging characterized by:

1. an awareness of reciprocal recognition among group members and towards the group (as self-recognition and hetero-recognition);
2. a sharing of public-life aspects (history and memory, habits, rules and values, symbols and rites, social life practices);
3. the availability of common resources (public goods, both material and symbolic);
4. a sense of solidarity both reciprocal and towards the group that makes the distribution of citizenship benefits and costs acceptable to the group;
5. a common legitimation of the command chain, its contents, its institutions and procedures;
6. borders and criteria of inclusion in/exclusion from citizenship that delimit the group with respect to others;
7. a shared territory (physically, legally and symbolically defined);
8. a possibility for the group to reproduce itself and to persist over time and generations notwithstanding changes that may affect the group.

The case of national identity fits perfectly with this definition of political-territorial identity. But this definition also marks a

[39] From the large body of historiographical, political, sociological and anthropological literature on the topic see e. g. Hintze [1962; 1964]; Rotelli, Schiera [1972-1974]; Maravall [1972]; Eisenstadt, Rokkan [1973]; Rokkan [1999]; Tilly [1975b]; Schultze [1994]; Hermet [1996]; Reinhard [1999]; Krasner [1999].

"qualitative" difference between national and regional identity. This difference can be shown by identifying and clarifying what lies hidden beneath these two types of collective identity (national and regional).

4. Politics, territory, identity: the paradigmatic case of Nation-State

The concept of national identity concerns the self- and hetero-recognition of a group as a Nation. Here "Nation" is used in a general sense to denote a human group, self-organized and self-governed, that shares a political identity within a particular territory's borders and maintains this identity and belonging over time (transmitting them from one generation to the next). According to this definition, "Nation" is a political concept that refers to the historical experience of the Nation-State; further, the Nation is the reference for movements that aim to make national identity and State coincide: that is, the coincidence of the sense of belonging with the legal, administrative, and coercive institutions of collective life organization.

Usually, specialized studies emphasise that State and Nation should be kept distinct at both the analytical and empirical levels. There are good reasons for doing so, but this distinction is more questionable than appears at first sight. I say here only that in this context I prefer the notion of "Nation-State" to refer to the typical (but not the only) result of complex historical processes of formation of the (modern) State and Nation.

When we use the term "Nation-State", we refer to a pervasive, deep-lying, and enduring experience and mental category that have defined the world in which we live – even though they are not the whole of it. I shall summarize some salient aspects:

a. the Nation-State is the most important and documented example of "political unity"; not by chance it has become the main field of studies on political development and political modernization [see e. g. Almond, Verba 1963; Organski 1965; Almond, Powell 1966; Pye 1966; Rustow 1967; Almond 1990; Rokkan 1999], a key element in historiographical, sociological,

and political narratives[40], and the empirical referent (often implicit) for the concept of society[41];

b. the Nation-State is a historical phenomenon characteristic of the European political world and it extends beyond its original areas: it is an important factor in Weber's "European uniqueness" of rationalization (in political-territorial organization spheres and with its economic, social, and cultural implications)[42], that is to say, an essential component of the "European trajectory towards modernity" [see Therborn 1995];
c. the Nation-State was the protagonist of, or at least the principal context for, the achievement of modern democracy and its citizenship system [see Marshall 1950; Bendix 1964; 1978; Dahl 1971; 1990; Turner, Hamilton 1994; Linz, Stepan 1996; Nevola 2007c].

But does the Nation-State still represent all this? Does it maintain its centrality in collective life? Or does it have, like any other historical phenomenon, a "life cycle" (birth, development, decline, death)?

In the past twenty years, in concomitance with globalization and political events linked to 1989, the Nation-State is deemed to be in a crisis, or even dead, by public opinion and academic studies[43]. On this view, the Nation-State can no longer perform the functions that made it successful because it is challenged or eroded by globalization, the market economy and European integration, by regionalist tendencies or by local powers[44]. This is

[40] I refer here to the large body of studies that reconstruct history using conceptual schemes centred on the Nation-State and to the political-science and sociological studies devoted to the most diverse aspects of social and political life (democracy, parties, the welfare State, the class structure, religious beliefs, and so on).

[41] This argument has been put forward, for example, by Giddens [1990]. The same line of inquiry has been pursued by political studies. See e.g. Freddi [1989]; Linz, Stepan [1996]; Fukuyama [2004]. That the Nation-State occupies a central position in political studies has also been confirmed in anthropology, although often in critical terms: See e.g. Geertz [1999].

[42] See Weber 1922; see also, almost a century later, Mendras [1997].

[43] See e.g. McGrew [1992]; Guehénno [1993]; Omahe [1995]; Varoius Authors [1995]; Strange [1996]; Brubaker [1996]; Badie [1995; 1999]; Galli [2001]; Cassese [2002]; Cooper [2003]; Hobsbawm [2007]. For a different point of view see e. g. Dunn [1995]; Smith, Solinger, Topik [1999].

[44] From this perspective it is typically asserted that the Nation-State has been

supposed to be happening within the same Europe where the Nation-State was born and will finally die. From this derives the conviction concerning the fragility or increasing irrelevance of the national identity, and that it is not a resource but rather an obstacle against social development and the government and governance of collective life.

This conclusion concerning the crisis or death of the Nation-State is not new. Over the centuries various analysts and observers have argued that the Nation-State was in a crisis. And they were always wrong. And it seems to be the same today[45]. The thesis of the irreversible crisis, if not the demise, of the Nation-State seems to rest on fragile bases.

National identity is still the primary form of political-territorial identity: this is demonstrated by the phenomenon of "national awakening" in the Western world and by the public debates that accompany it in the European countries and the USA (but also outside the Western area); and it is also shown by the paralysis, if not the regression, of European political integration and the failure of other projects for the supra-national federal unification of macro-areas[46]. In the "post-1989" world (and since 11 September 2001), the return of a national form of collective identity/belonging, and its persistence despite prognoses of a post-national epoch, are undeniable on the factual level, beyond any judgement about its value[47]. The essential reasons as to why

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discredited by the two world wars of the first half of the twentieth century; that it dissolved during "les trentes glorieuses" of the second postwar period; and became an anachronistic and ineffective political space in comparison to social, economic and cultural realities: "too small to serve as an effective unit of coordination in an increasingly internationalized world, too large and remote to be a plausible and legitimate entity of identification" [Brubaker 1996, 2]. For a more meticulous, balanced, and multi-faceted analysis of these tendencies see Sassen [2006; 2007; Cofrancesco 2010].

[45] The active role of the Nation-State and demands for its intervention in social and economic-financial life since 2001 and the financial crisis of recent years (demands made by the most diverse sectors of society and the economy) should be considered by even the most intransigent proponents of the demise of the Nation-State – also remembering that it has never been omnipotent.

[46] See on France Taguieff [1995a]; on the United States Huntington [2004]; on Italy Rusconi [1993]; Nevola [2003d]; on Germany Maier [1988]; Lepenies [1992]; for a comparative perspective Kellas [1991]; Smith [1995]; Grilli di Cortona [2003]; on European integration and its political-identitarian failure see Nevola [2007a]. See also notes 47 and 50.

[47] With reference to various phenomena and their analysis see: Mueller-Funk [1992]; Offe [1993]; Breton, Galeotti, Salmon, Wintrobe [1995]; Kupchan [1995]; Rupnik [1995]; Birbaum [1997]; Brabaker [1996]; Haupt, Mueller, Woolf [1998]; Cordellier, Poisson [1995];

the Nation is still a protagonist have been summarized, among others, by Pierre-Andrè Taguieff[48], who advances considerations which current political analyses usually overlook. Even if the crudity of Taguieff's observations may be uncomfortable for a certain rhetoric of "political correctness", it would be ingenuous or wrong on both political and analytical grounds to disregard them. Taguieff writes: Une identité collective existe à la condition de faire l'objet d'une croyance, de costituer la reference des gestes symbolique. Porquoi donc la collection d'humains s'identifiant comme "francais" manifeste-t-elle un "besoin" d'identification, en dépit des cours de boudoir des noveaux réformateurs de l'esprit public, s'efforcant de persuader celui-ci que désormais les cadres de l'Etat-nation sont devenus "trop étroits" pour résoudre efficacement les grands problems des societies post-industrielles, que les Etats sont condamnés à l'impuissance bavarde en raison des interdependences planétaires, et que c'est là un signe émis par le sens de l'Histoire? Et si l'identité francais, bien que notion indistinct, est une idée incarnée, incorporée, intériorisée, peut-il en aller de meme pour une identité supranationale telle que celle de l'Europe? Et les individus humains peuvent-ils se satisfaire d'appartenir sans médiation au genre humain? Car l'espéce humaine ne saurait constituer une communauté (politique ou culturelle), elle n'est qu'un concept classificatoire, et d'ordre zoologique. Une communauté, structure existentielle d'appartenance, n'est ni une espéece (zoologiquement determine), ni un genre (moralment define). Bref, l'identité planétaire d'un individu humain demeure une fiction, expression pure d'un désir de type "océanique" (la fusion dans le Grand Tout). Rien ne doit bien sur interdire à nos contemporains de rever, et, par example, de s'enthousiarmer devant l'émergence d'une nouvelle utopia, celle de l'existence post-nationale des humains pacifique et départicularisés de l'avenir… Mais le doux reve du post-national parait n'Etre qu'une fragile compensation-écran, voilant la réalité

Scharpf [1997]; Smith [1995]. See also notes 46 and 50.

[48] I would point out that Pierre-Andrè Taguieff, a careful scholar of racism, is a well-known and declared anti-nationalist and anti-racist. See Taguieff [1987; 1995b]. He refers to the issue of French national identity, but it is entirely evident that his questions and intellectual provocations apply to the question of national identity in general.

hypernationaliste du monde qui semble advenir"[49].

In Taguieff's argument we find a well-expressed position of political realism, as well as all the perplexity provoked by the thesis of the advent of the "post-national epoch". But besides the anthropological-political element that Taguieff underlines, and beyond the return of the Nation and of patriotism, there are more specific tensions pushing for change that are present even within the most consolidated democratic societies, especially since the fall of Communism[50]. National belonging and identity are today the principal points of coalescence of such tensions, and at the same time they are delicate ideological resources (that is, political-cultural mechanisms of "meaning" production) with which to subdue those tensions – resources that can be used politically for different purposes (from aggressive nationalism to constitutional patriotism).

On considering the Nation as one (obviously not the only) source of identity and a sense of belonging to which communities still refer, it is easy to understand why the national question has returned to the agenda from its state of latency and repression, especially when a political community must deal with problematic change processes and challenges which threaten its cohesion and (social, economic, religious, cultural, territorial, political) balances, if not its very existence. The reference, of course, is to the situation of many Western democracies after the Cold War.

Now briefly discussed are some of the principal changes and crisis factors that have entered the international stage since 1989 (and impacted on collective life in the Nation-States). Why and how the phenomena described below fuel the return of the Nation are easily understandable for the reader, although each of these phenomena should require more details[51]:

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[49] Taguieff [1995a, 131-32]. See also Lemberg [1964]; Smith [1995]; Nevola [2002]. Of course, also the "post-national" utopia is not an entirely new notion. Nor does it imply that anything utopian is by definition of little value or uninfluential in social life. The concept of "community" used here by Taguieff relates to the one formulated by Weber [1922].

[50] Significant studies on the problem of national identity in other European countries are, for example: Habermas [1990]; Birbaum [1992]; Greenfeld [1993]; Brubaker [1992]; two extensive thematic sections in *Les Temps Modernes* [608, 2000] and in *Political Quarterly* [1, 2000] respectively devoted to the French and British cases. See also the references at notes 46 and 47.

[51] The references that follow, with no claim to completeness, indicate analyses that help clarify phenomena and issues that stand in the background to my discussion but can

a. The fall of the Soviet Union and of its imperial structure, and the contemporary demise of communist doctrine, brought to the forefront nationalisms and micro-nationalisms that had been silent or invisible, first in central-eastern Europe, and then elsewhere. Similar phenomena have been due to the break-up of Yugoslavia, where very aggressive nationalisms have emerged. In this broad international context there came about the sudden re-unification of Germany, which implied, among other things, an acceleration of critical reflection on German identity and a push towards a renewed national self-consciousness [see e.g. Various Authors 1991; Nahayho, Swoboda 1990; Garton Ash 1992; Cviic 1993; Waldenberg 1994; Rupnik 1995; Brubaker 1996; see also notes 47 and 50];
b. The economic-financial and communication globalization processes, with the freedom of capital movements, the de-materialization of wealth and its tendency to escape the fiscal regimes of individual states, has put the bonds of national belonging under strain, starting with the fragile mechanisms of collective solidarity represented by the welfare of a political community. But there is also the opposite trend represented by forms of "particularism", a search for local roots and genuine specificities. Between the two extremes of globalism and localism the Nation-State is once again called into question: either because it is clamped in the vice of "glocalism" or because it is re-valued as a point of political-democratic balance between macro- and micro-belongings [see e. g. Guhénno 1993; Held 1995; Omahe 1995; Smith 1995; Clark 1997; Geertz 1999; Beck 1997; 2002; Bauman 2000; 2001; Baldassarre 2002; Sassen 2006; 2007];
c. The process of European integration, and its limits, strongly recalls the traditional role and physiognomy of the Nation-State, as well as the consistency of the sense of national identity/belonging of citizens with respect to the European sense. Besides the difficulties that European integration has encountered in the post-Maastricht period, there is an evident resurgence of political will in defence of "part positions", national in this case; or the persistent strength of national

only be alluded to here.

belonging/identity with respect to the European one. Finally apparent is a revaluation of the Nation-State as a political-institutional space of democracy due to the "democratic deficit" of the European Union [see e. g. Habermas 1991; Haller, Richter 1994; Grimm 1994; Rusconi 1996; Dahrendorf 1997; Banchoff, Smith 1999; Schmitter 2000; Nevola 2001a; 2001b; 2007a];

d. The immobilism into which the European integration process lapsed after Maastricht and following introduction of the euro, on the one hand, and political-military conflicts and international terrorism on the other, came after the end of the bi-polarized world. It revealed the irreducibility of the logic of "national security and interest" and forced individual Nation-State s to establish urgently and clearly their national political interests and their geopolitical roles. In this frame, the war scenarios revived the issues of patriotism and national political loyalty [see e. g. Huntington 1996; Portinaro 1996; Clark 1997; Panebianco 1997];
e. Migrations (intra-European and extra-European), with their disruptive and complex effects, lead to give new attention to the Nation-State borders (within the same European Union common space) as well as forcefully raise the issues of inter-cultural relations, inter-ethnic cohabitation, multiculturalism, communitarianism, and the meaning of national belonging/identity [see e. g. Various Authors 1990; Taylor 1992; Bonazzi, Dunne 1994; Crespi, Segatori 1996; Kymlicka 1995; Sartori 2000; Kimlicka, Opalski 2001; Banting, Kimlicka 2006; Todorov 2008; Moisi 2009].

The Nation is a source (clearly not the only one) of a sense of belonging and identity on which political communities draw. It is therefore evident why the national question arises especially during critical periods for a political community (when, for example, it has to deal with changes and challenges that may affect its balance or its existence itself). This is the situation in which the majority of Western democracies today find themselves.

Notwithstanding these manifestations of national-identitary "revival", however, many analysts argue that the existence of a "national revival" does not signify that Nations exist; and they

counsel against reifying the "Nation" [see e. g. Brubaker 1996]. To be sure, national identity is a "construct". The Nation-State is a historical product, and the Nation is "imagined"; but this is the case of all identities, as well as all the phenomena of our lives. But others are the points that we should be stress:

1. once identities "exist", they produce consequences: they shape attitudes and behaviours, they become "realities";
2. the "reality" of identities depends on the modalities and success of their formation processes, and on certain conditions. What about these last conditions?

Political science and historical-sociological studies on the political development and Nation-States building have shown the multiple factors that underlie the formation of political-territorial collective identities: economic-industrial and financial structures, strategies of interest groups, political and juridical institutions, coercive mechanisms, military organizations, communicative networks, cultural agencies, etc. They propose various combinations of these dimensions, occurring in different phases, during the construction of the Nation-State [see Deutsch 1953; Etzioni 1965; Bendix 1964; Almond, Powell 1966; Pye 1966; Lipset, Rokkan 1967; Rokkan 1968; 1969; 1971; 1975; 1981; Rokkan, Urwin 1983; Tilly 1975b; 1990; Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; De Swann 1988; Breully 1993; Hermet 1996; Wehler 2001]. But all of them recognize that the cultural dimension (or better, the political-cultural one) plays a central role. As Charles Tilly summarized [see Tilly 1975a], during the formation of the Nation-State almost all European governments took action to "homogenize" their populations as regards religion, ethnic and cultural minorities, a national language, and a public system of mass education. Governments that did not take such action, or failed to accomplish it, gave rise to very fragile and precarious Nation-States, as happened typically in south-eastern Europe. In other words, they failed with the *politics of identity*, and this failure generated major problems with national identity (and consequently for the Nation-State).

The cultural success of the political identity of the Nation-State and its elites can be considered on various levels:

1. the cultural homogenization of social norms, behaviour

expectations, symbols and values, beliefs, collective and public rites, customs and traditions [see Elias 1939; Tilly 1975a; Rokkan 1975; Smith 1991; 2008; Hermet 1996; Thiesse 1999];

2. the linguistic unification based on a synthesis between vernaculars and "court national language": this synthesis took the place of vulgar Latin (often metabolized as a "substrate") and gave origin to the different national languages (of Romance/neo-Latin, Germanic or Celtic stock) [see Rokkan 1975; De Swann 1988; Hermet 1996; on more strictly linguistic aspects see Auerbach 1948; 1958];
3. the creation of a unitarian network of communicative infrastructures able to connect individuals and groups previously scattered among physical and communicative territories – the "local spaces" of the emerging Nation-State [see Deutsch 1953; De Swann 1988];
4. the programs of compulsory elementary education geared to training workers and/or citizens for the tasks required by work (especially in industry) and/or by the political system (especially the democratic one), whose effects were the onset of social mobility and political participation by worker-citizens, enlargement of the labour force and the consensus sought by economic and political entrepreneurs [see De Swann 1988; Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983; Hermet 1996];
5. the promotion of a political culture and identification with the Nation to be realized through a "struggle for recognition" led by a central political authority against the peripheral or local ones (churches, princedoms, local communities, elites etc.), as well as through multiple political culture channels (including public rites), both for the mass and for the élite [see Rokkan 1975; Rokkan, Urwin 1983; Smith 1991; Hermet 1996; Thiesse 1999; on individual national cases see e. g. Mosse 1974; Vovelle 1976].

The political-identitary project pursued by the élites of the Nation-State on the way to unification, and activated through the channels of political culture, political socialization and the educational system, developed through various phases.

As well known, this project was never entirely peaceful because it always had to overcome numerous opponents:

churches, local seigniories, peripheral elites and communities, sometimes the working-class movement itself. But above all, the project almost never achieved complete or absolute political-cultural integration in regard to certain important aspects (especially linguistic and religious). The continuing presence of strong ethno-cultural and linguistic minorities, of local-regional identities and loyalties, throughout most of the history of Nation-States reveals the incompleteness of the integration. The historical persistence of these phenomena shows that the central authority of the Nation-State, and in parallel national identity/loyalty, have been questioned or rejected – in many cases until the present day[52].

The politics of identity and the national identity are essential components of a society's political culture. According to a definition widely used in the social sciences (however unsatisfactorily) [see Almond 1960; Almond, Verba 1963; Almond, Powell 1966; for a critique see Caciagli 1988; Allum 1988], a political culture consists of a set of individual attitudes predominant in a given population. A political culture is a sort of "social machine" whose possible outcome is legitimation of the political system to which it belongs. Political legitimation, in fact, is *also* based on the fact that individuals *identify* with the political community to which they *feel* that they belong. From this derives the support that they provide to the political community represented by the Nation-State, with its borders (territorial, political, cultural, juridical and symbolic) and its authoritative process of self-government. For these reasons, success in formation of the Nation-State, its persistence, and its good functioning, depend not only on the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of its political institutions but also on the capacity of its political culture to maintain a sense of belonging to it – that is, a national identity [see Linz 1995; Nevola 2007c].

On the basis of these considerations we may say, summarizing, that the concept of Nation-State refers to a human group

[52] For overviews or analyses of individual cases see: Smith [1991]; Rokkan, Urwin [1983]; Tiryakian, Rogoski [1985]; Connor [1994]; Williams, Kofman [1989]; Rex [1995]; Haupt, Mueller, Woolf [1998]; Grilli di Cortona [2003]; Caciagli [2003]; De Winter, Tuersan [1998]; Gourevitch [1979]; Hechter [1975]; Minahan [2002]; Newman [1996]; Seiler [1994]; Smith [1981]. On the extreme case of secession see Williams [1982]; Nevola [1998].

organized on a territory that shares a sense of collective identity and belonging founded on shared history, cultural heritage, authoritative norms and interests; that reproduces and remoulds its identity/belonging over time, transmitting it from one generation to the next; and that is characterized by self-recognition and hetero-recognition. In other words, a Nation-State is a political-cultural community marked by a collective identity/belonging, by an authoritative system of self-government, by loyalty and political obligation.

The Nation-State is, moreover, a "thought-out ordering", that is to say, a "defined representation" that identifies a collectiveness of men with a unity [see Lepsius 1982] and as such it (and then the national identity) can be characterised ("thought out") with identitary contents combined to varying extents. As it is known, political thought and the social sciences have highlighted different conceptions of the Nation and national identity using a variety of constitutive characters with an "objective" nature (language, religion, territory) or a "subjective" one (perception or awareness of belonging to a political community). On these bases, several classifications and typologies of national identities and "modalities of being a Nation" have been formulated. These diverse conceptions of the Nation can be grouped into a few principal "families" consolidated for (at least) two centuries by political thought and then revisited by the social sciences: the ethnic or ethno-cultural Nation (*volksnation*), the cultural Nation, the civic-political Nation (or citizens' Nation), the Nation as constitution (constitutional or republican patriotism). Ultimately, identifying the Nation (or a Nation) in one way or another depends on what Rainer M. Lepsius called the "criteria for the determination" of national collectiveness used in a in the conception of the Nation [see Lepsius 1982]. These criteria are established with the important contribution of intellectuals, élites, political movements and common people, over long historical periods, routinely or at particular and accelerated critical conjunctures of collective life. These criteria, moreover, are tools and stakes for the political identitary struggle (in particular on the side of the struggle for political-cultural "hegemony" (to recall a concept of Antonio Gramsci and Pierre Bourdieu). Also through these processes Nation-States and national identities tend, in the case of success,

to settle, to "objectivise themselves" until they become "national facts". The diversified family of nationalistic movements (with their ideologies, languages, symbols, political actions) is not only and always the architect of these "national facts"; it is also a revealing factor of them.

5. The structuring of political space between centre and peripheries: Nation-State and the persistence of territorial cleavages

The historical success of the Nation-State and its identitary configuration should not cause a misunderstanding. The historical process of State-building and national integration has been very difficult, painful, and almost never peaceful. In the main cases, even within the European elective area, many attempts to build a Nation-State have failed: after the First World War, for example, only thirty of the thousands of "political-statual" units that had existed in Europe during the fifteenth century still did so (*e pluribus pauci*, one might say) [see Tilly 1975a; see also Spruyt 1994]. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there were still alternative forms and natures that a political unit could assume. Besides the modern State (then national) that subsequently prevailed, there were arrangements such as the political federation (more or less coordinated by a centre); the empire (weakly controlled by a centre); the Christian republic (kept unified by the Catholic Church); the commercial city (especially in northern Italy and in Germany); an extensive network of commercial units (with no central political organization: this being the case of the Hanseatic League); the "feudal" system (then disappearing) [see Tilly 1975a; Grilli di Cortona 2003]. These alternatives to the Nation-State have failed for numerous reasons: they were unable to bind and control a territory; they were unable to centralize power, law and administration; they were unable to create specific instruments of governance different from any other organization; they were unable to standardize communication and transitional instruments (such as currency, units of measurement, language); they were unable either to monopolize or to centralize the system of resources extraction (taxes); they were unable either to

monopolize or to concentrate the coercive system (use of force, the army); they were unable to build a single shared cultural identity able to transform itself into loyalty or political obligation and thereby yield legitimization. In sum, they failed the "political unification test", and they then surrendered to the political organization form of the Nation-State [see Nevola 2007a].

During its enterprise of multi-dimensional structuring the political unit, the Nation-State had to overcome the resistance of many opponents (sometimes themselves constituted as political unities) until it absorbed them: princedoms, free cities, a variety of kingdoms, élites and peripheral communities. The historical processes that operated in these genetic phases of the Nation-State, and in projections during later centuries, are those that come under the heading of relations between "centre" and "peripheries" [see Rokkan 1999; Grilli di Cortona 2003], or rather "internal colonialism" [Hechter 1975]. Behind the patterns of the relations between the "centre" and the "peripheries" lies the reality of persistent cleavages within the Nation-State, as well as the Nation-State's efforts to remove them. These are in particular the "territorial cleavages" (or better "political-territorial" ones). As emphasised by Stein Rokkan, territorial cleavages raise bigger obstacles than functional ones against construction of the Nation-State. Territorial cleavages may even lead to war, secession or deportation of entire populations [see Rokkan 1975]. They must be kept to the minimum for the successful formation and maintenance of the Nation-State; and the peripheries need to be kept under the control of the centre (even if this control may differ in form and intensity)[53].

[53] Various factors, in an "extraordinary historical synchronism" (between the end of the fifteenth century and the end of the eighteenth), contributed to the success of the "unifying centre". In the synthesis formulated by Rokkan, "first of all the development of the literate bureaucracies and legal institutions, largely through the cooperation of the Church with the Dynasties of the conquest centers; second, the growth of the trade and the emergence of new industries, developments which allowed the military-administrative machineries to expand without destroying their resource basis; and third, the emergence of national script and the consequent attempts to unify the peripheral territories culturally around a standard medium of internal communication: this development was pushed one step further at the Reformation, through the break with the cross-territorial Latin culture, and was accelerated through the invention of printing, through the multiple reproduction of messages without relays" [Rokkan 1975, 597]. On language see in particular also De Swaan [1988].

The last phase in the formation of the Nation-State is the "nationalization of the masses", the inclusion of the populace in political life and mass democratization[54]. At this point, if the process has succeeded, national identity acquires the features of a mass political culture, and eventually a liberal-democratic one as normally understood. In regard to this complex historical-political process I would emphasise at least one aspect, given its implications for the topic at hand: the possibility that such a political identitary culture develops does not depend solely on coercion or economic factors (even if they are essential); it requires the presence of a "political will" supported by a certain degree of consensus. Here, especially in the long run, the Nation-State formation has to acquire legitimation; alongside these processes, a certain degree of cultural communion among people reveals its importance[55].

However, we should not overvalue the cultural (ideological, economic) homogenization usually achieved by a Nation-State. The historical and empirical evidence is clear in this regard. Moreover, we should be careful not to equivocate. Despite the apparent homogeneity suggested by the expression, "Nation-State" refers properly to a complex and diversified political construct. One of the main sources of this internal variety is the plurality/diversity of the *territories* that have been unified into the political territory of a Nation-State, and therefore the heterogeneity of the communities settled on those different (local) territories historically involved in the process of national political integration[56]. On these bases, the national identity itself results

[54] See Dahl [1971]; Rokkan [1999]. On the non-democratic variant of mass nationalization, and specifically on the German case, see Mosse [1974]; more in general Mazower [1998].

[55] This has been argued even by scholars who tend to privilege force as a factor in the formation of the Nation-State, if nothing else because the presence of a culturally homogeneous population reduced the costs of State formation: it makes more feasible to uniform the administrative arrangements, encoures the loyalty and solidarity of the subject population to the sovereigns, makes easier the functioning of the communication systems [see Tilly 1975a]. The weight of this cultural dimension is also recognized by those who have such cultural exigencies (promoted by the social elites) depend on the structure and the interests of the industrial-capitalist economy: see Gellner [1983]; Hobsbawm [1994]. On the importance of political will, even more than of economic interests, see Hermet [1996]. On the connection between collective identity and legitimation in democracy see e. g. Eisenstadt [1999]; Scharpf [1997].

[56] As Rokkan [1999] has stressed in regard to the history of the European geopolitical

from a sort of assemblage, which may or may not be successful, of several different elements[57]. A "monochromatic" Nation-State is an ideal-type which can be used for analytical explanation and speculation, but not for empirical description. It can even be argued that the Nation-State often has a "plural-national" nature [see Linz 1995]. This typical condition of the Nation-State has important implications not only for the institutional organization of the State [see Elazar 1987; Kellas 1991; Linz 1995; Lijphart 1999] but also for the theme of national identity considered here.

After 1989 the theory of the "end of territory" [see Badie 1995] became popular: globalization and its technical-communicative implications seemingly entailed a de-territorialized world (in respect to economy, politics, culture, habits and life-style). But this vision is rather abstract [see Sassen 2007]. It mistakes some tendencies widespread among some social classes or some élites for a general pattern. De-territorializing has never been either a *rooted* or a *general* phenomenon in "real" collective life almost anywhere in the world. Once again it has been politics that has given visibility to a reality on which neoliberal-postmodern thought equivocated. In this specific case the reference is to the entry on the political stage of various movements linked to the territory and their growing political and electoral success, in particular certain movements with a nationalist, micro-nationalist or "regionalist", ethno-regionalist orientation.

But this is not all (as we shall see later). In recent years some analysts have talked of the "re-territorialization of politics" [see Grilli di Cortona 2003; Sassen 2006; 2007; for Italian case see e. g. Diamanti 1993; 1996; Huysseune 2006]. This notion, or better the notion of "(re-)politicization" of territory introduces a change in the view of politics dominant in the past three decades. Bearing this in mind, a first question is whether we are witnessing a real "return" of "sub-national territories nationalism" and of "regional" micro-nationalism, or whether we are witnessing only the persistence of a phenomenon over short periods in which it disappears or is latent[58].

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area, the variance of the territories unified by the Nation-States is a valuable source for the study of politics.

[57] I have elsewhere treated this topic in regard to Italy: see Nevola [2003e].

[58] For the twentieth century see Mazower [1998].

I raise this question because during the 1960s and 1970s analysts emphasised the awakening of sub-national or regional-nationalisms, that is, "ethnical revival" or "ethnical-nationalism" [see Smith 1981; Kellas 1991; Connor 1994]: Scottish, Welsh, Irish (within the United Kingdom); Corsican, Breton, Occitan (within France); Catalan, Basque, Galician (within Spain); Flemish, Walloon (within Belgium); South-Tyrolean (within Italy). In the 1960s these phenomena were surprising, as they are more or less so still today. But are they really surprising? Analysis of the formation processes of the Nation-State suggests that they are not, and the *nature* of what we can call the "regional fact" suggests likewise.

As shown by politological, sociological and historiographic studies on transformations in the Nation-States, the different national experiences of political unification have not completely healed territorial cleavages (in their economic-functional, socio-cultural or political-institutional aspects). In fact, the problem of a distinct regional form of territorial "politicity" is still present [see Caciagli 1988; 2003; Rokkan, Urwin 1982; 1983; Horowitz 1985; Williams, Kofman 1989; Chisholm, Smith 1990; Haupt, Mueller, Woolf 1998]. A useful analytic approach to this question is the one based on the notion of "political culture". This approach views "local counter-cultures" (or regional political sub-cultures) as variously organized forms of "resistance" against the centralizing action of the Nation-State [see Rokkan 1999; Caciagli 1988]. This "resistance" is not just a reflection of the past. I shall now consider the other face of the territory's importance for identity phenomena: the "regional face".

6. Some observations on the regional identity question

The "regional phenomenon" has attracted renewed attention since the 1990s [see e. g. Schiera 1993; Harvey 1994; Haupt, Mueller, Woolf 1998; Perulli 1998; Caciagli 2003; Various Authors 2005]. Long the last twenty years it has flourished within a context different from that of the 1960s. The course of European integration, geopolitical disruption within Eastern Europe, the

globalization process (as the opening of economic markets and the revolution in communication systems), migration waves to European countries (but also to the United States): all these have linked more strongly than in the past the "regional question" to the question of the Nation-State's crisis and increasing "democratic unease" [see Nevola 2007b] – a "malaise" that sees public disillusion with the typical institutions of national representative democracies (traditional parties, parliament, government) and the success of neo-populist or anti-party movements [see e. g. Lasch 1995; Canovan 1999; Taggart 2000; Mény, Surel 2000; 2002; Betz 2004; Laclau 2005; Lukacs 2005; Taguieff 2007].

The "fait regional" (the sub-national one in which we are interested) is manifest in three main interrelated aspects: region, regionalization, and regionalism.

1. THE REGION. Adequate understanding of a national society, as we know, also depends on its territorial organization[59], whether this latter rests on economic-structural differences of capitalism and its social formations, pluralism and linguistic-literary richness, the diversification of political culture and of the civic-associative fabric, the variety of electoral behaviours and tendencies in which the motley nature of democratic politics is apparent. Like many concepts with political valence, that of the region is difficult to define univocally. But even if somewhat vague [see Rost, Stoelting 2005], it usually refers to collective life spaces of intermediate size between "small-scale" (local or micro-regional) and "large-.scale" (world regions). In our case the concept refers to collective life contexts characterized by a variable homogeneity (political, economic, cultural, linguistic, climatic) embedded within a higher-level unit, like the Nation-State, and depending on the latter in important respects. These are contexts that often present some political-administrative aspects (or claim them). This political-administrative aspect is sometimes quite weak (as in the case of a unitary-centralistic type of Nation-State, France for example); sometimes it is very strong (as in the case of a federal Nation-

[59] For an analysis of the Italian case, with the focus on the numerous dimensions of territorial variety, see Coppola [1997].

State, like Germany or the United States); while the majority of cases lie between these two extremes (like Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom). The intensity of this political-administrative aspect may change over time because of a variety of processes that are ultimately political. Interpreted in this way, the concept of region has a quite broad denotation that includes the "historical region" (usually associated with ethnic bonds), but does not end with it. In other words, "region" can have a political-administrative denotation or a social-cultural one (sometimes they coincide). In the former case, a region is the "largest political-administrative unit" within the Nation-State; in the latter, a region coincides with "a territory that hosts a collectivity with a distinctive identity" [Caciagli 2003, 15-16]. Yet regions are not "natural realities"; they too are, obviously, "constructed" historically, socially, politically, and culturally. Once again, we have a cultural and political "invention" [see Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983], and this holds regardless of whether or not "existing regions" are based on "authentic" historical traditions, whether or not they are of recent development, and whether or not they have originated from the simply existence of an administrative boundary [see Rost, Stoelting 2005] – although all these aspects may produce differences among the features of existing regions. Leaving aside epistemological discussion on the "reality status" of historical-political phenomena, here it is once again of importance to focus on "regions as inventions". Put briefly, what is relevant here is that, over time, the "invented regions" – or at least some of them – have become "objective" and "institutionalized" (in the sense explained by sociological theories)[60]. It has thus happened that even the most "artificial" regions have consolidated and become institutionalized within collective imagery, political culture, political-administrative practice, and sometimes even the everyday life-practices of

[60] See on this the seminal studies by Durkheim, Weber, Schütz or Gehlen. For a theory on how social phenomena become "objectified", and which also assumes the perspective of action and the actor where reality is "socially constructed", see Berger, Luckmann [1966]; for a more recent resumption and reformulation of this view of social phenomena see Berger, Luckmann [1995].

citizens[61]. In sum, transmitted from one generation to the next as "spaces of collective life" characterized by a certain relational density, even some of the most artificial regions have become "realities" – *social realities*, that is, political-territorial contexts. In other words, they have become elements of collective memory, *definite* containers of events and characters, myths and stereotypes. Regions tend to produce, reproduce and project their identities. Sometimes regions are replete with history and politics, sometimes they are less so. Moreover, they differ by their levels of internal integration or of external "recognition" (or "weight"). Besides these differences, the "existence" of a "regional identitary fabric", consisting of cultural elements, economic interests, powers, and inertias, is the reason why it is so difficult to reconfigure "regional spaces" (both at national and European level).

2. REGIONALIZATION. The notion of "regionalization" relates to the promotion of regions and regional identities. Usually, this is a top-down process that develops through reforms undertaken by the Nation-State so that some functions and competences are devolved to regional administrations. The process also entails the increased value of territorial criteria in the organization of interests, and in political choices [see Smith 1985; Caciagli 2003; Rost, Stoelting 2005]. As well known, in the past twenty years Europe has seen an increase in regionalization due to pressures applied by local élites, the claims of regional movements, the need to reform State governance, and incentives from the European Union.
3. REGIONALISM. The term "regionalism" has various meanings. Here regionalism is taken to be a political-cultural process in which a collectivity with a sense of territorial belonging takes action, or an élite mobilizes and organizes the cultural, economic, and political interests of a territory [see Brunn 1995; Caciagli 2003]. After being considered for several centuries a regressive ideology typical of *laudatores temporis actis*, which the proponents of modernization opposed, regionalism obtained political-cultural dynamism in the 1960s and 1970s,

[61] This is the case, for example, of certain Italian regions.

and then over the past twenty years. Regionalism seemed initially to be the ideology of marginalized backward regions exploited by the "centre" ("internal colonialism"), but it soon became the badge of the richest and most developed regions (as in the cases of Catalonia, Lombardy, Veneto or Flanders)[62]. The most visible incarnations of regionalism are political or ideological movements, sometimes outright political parties, predicated on territorial identity and interests, and advancing historical-cultural, political and economic claims. In some cases such movements openly reject the Nation-State's authority by claiming not only cultural and administrative recognition but also political autonomy, federalism, or even separation (using violent or peaceful means) [see e. g. King 1982; Burgess 1986; Elazar 1987; Chisholm, Smith 1990; Buchanan 1991; Twining 1991; Burgess, Gagnon 1993; Tullock 1994; Miglio, Barbera 1997; Nevola 1997b; Coppieters, Huysseune 2002].

Although it may happen that radical forms of regional identitary movements dispute the political national identity, the latter and regional identity are not necessarily in conflict with each other[63]. This observation backed by a tendency apparent at the political level. That is to say, when the most extreme expressions of regionalism raise the questions of the self-determination and self-government of regional communities, and consequently claim recognition as "new" Nation-States, the political movements or parties that embodied that claim almost never pass the "political unification" test or receive democratic legitimization according to electoral rules[64]. It is no coincidence that the idea of separation

[62] For a map of regionalisms or regional micronationalisms and of ethno-regionalist movements in Europe see e.g. Luverà [1999]; Caciagli [2003]; Grilli di Cortona [2003]; Haupt, Mueller, Woolf [1998]; De Winter, Tuersan [1998]; Tronconi [2009]; Huysseune [2011].

[63] See, for example, the Italian case of the "special statute regions" in Nevola [2003e]; Woolf [2000].

[64] Exceptions to this general pattern, at least since the Second World War, have been the violent dissolution of the USSR and Yugoslavia and the peaceful one of Czechoslovakia. Instead, there have been no cases of the dissolution of mass liberal-democratic regimes, notwithstanding the tensions in Canada (the case of Quebec), in Spain (with the Basque Country), in Belgium (with Flanders and Wallonia), in France (with Corsica) or in Italy (first with Sicily, then with the South-Tyrol/Alto Adige, finally with "Padania"). On the political unification test see Nevola [2007a]; on the problem of the

from the Nation-State hardly ever receives full support from the majority of the "regional population" (although this is difficult to measure). Nor is it a coincidence that secession, from the point of view of political realism, usually seems to be more a threat with which to obtain recognition and privileges than a real goal.

7. On the "strength" of national identity

Several studies have examined the impact of sub-national political culture on Nation-State cohesion. Some have argued that sub-national political cultures with an ethno-linguistic basis "used to provoke and will probably provoke more and more centrifugal pressures" [Caciagli 1988, 454]. Such sub-national cultures manifest certain types of political antagonism. However, history has shown that this antagonism has not always taken the form of radical and violent claims. This has been due in part to the repression, coercive integration and political-cultural socialization skills of the Nation-State. But it has also been due to the success of "recognition politics" between centre and peripheries. A collective identity is formed, in part, by "recognition, un-recognition or misrecognition" by others [see Taylor 1992]; from this derives the political importance of the "struggle for recognition" in the formation processes of collective identities [see note 36], including political-territorial ones. What conditions may favor this reciprocal recognition?

Firstly, for this reciprocal recognition between region and Nation-State to come about, it is important that there be appropriate political institutions able to regulate a plurality of collective identities. The regionalization of Nation-State structures, federal systems and consociational political systems in many cases satisfies the need for reciprocal recognition on political-institutional bases [see e. g. Horowitz 1985; Kellas 1991; Lijphart 1999]. These are experiences well-established in the Western democracies, even if in some cases tensions between the Nation-State and regional peripheries persist. Whether they are consolidated experiences or more recent tendencies, in several

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democratic legitimation of secessionist claims see Buchanan [1991]; Nevola [1998].

cases, political arrangements of a regional, federal or consociational kind have been able to respond even to "centrifugal regionalism" [see Huysseune 2011], whose radical claims for self-government or independence sometimes hide a political strategy pursuing more moderate aims. It seems, for example, the case of the Lega Nord in Italy and its claims for autonomy on independence of "Padania".

Secondly, successful reciprocal recognition between the Nation-State and regional areas also depends on the role of the political elites: their behaviours and attitudes strongly influence the quality of national integration and the recognition of national and sub-national territorial identities [see Linz 1995].

Thirdly, political-institutional solutions and the attitudes of political élites must be sustained by a political culture that operates at mass level as well; a political culture able to create a feeling of "us", of shared belonging to a national community, a common political identity. This political culture must in particular create a national identity able to contain the specific identities of the territories that form a Nation-State.

Given these institutional, élite-politics and mass political culture conditions, some cases of centrifugal regionalism still exist: regionalism characterized by strong historical-cultural rootedness (often centered on language or on religion) and by radical claims (for self-government, political independence, control over economic and fiscal resources, identitary closure of the citizenship system). This is perhaps the case of Belgium. What prospects of success does this kind of regionalism have?

In Europe, the past few years have seen the emergence of a thesis that views the "region" as a political-territorial and economic actor able to affirm its identitary centrality vis-à-vis the Nation-State. This has been due to the presumed surrender of the Nation-State and to the political malaise afflicting the national democracies. National politics have been discredited by corruption or by their failure to respond satisfactorily to citizens' fears (economic crisis, unemployment, crime, immigration, cultural diversity). But this thesis of the identitary centrality of the region in comparison to the Nation-State is not convincing. It does not persuade when it implies that authoritative bonds ("political obligations") should be shifted from the Nation-State

to the regional space. In this case, in fact, the region should acquire the political characteristics of a Nation-State, but the chances of this happening are very small. This identitary-territorial change of authoritative bonds would require demanding conditions and political resources very difficult for the actors seeking to achieve this goal to find.

The thesis of the region's identitary centrality rests on a perspective with a solid historical-political basis and, mostly, on the contingent and changing nature of political unification forms. But the crux of this view is that, in the current historical-political setting (especially in democracies), the "region" (or similar "sub-national" as well as transnational aggregations) seem unable to pass the "political unification test". Exceptions are the centrifugal phenomena of the Eastern Europe that arose from the communist system (examples are the former Soviet Union, former Yugoslavia and former Czechoslovakia); but as regards Western democratic Europe, Belgium is the only case to keep seriously under observation.

What a "region" lacks is not a common political culture or a cultural identity (which are sometimes even stronger than those of the Nation-State) but a political identity: which is the translation of the collective identity into binding loyalty ("political obligation"). The relevance of political identity emerges mostly when multiple identities are exposed to "belonging conflicts"[65]. The Nation-State is still the political-territorial and symbolic space in which political premises and instruments are available to manage public problems authoritatively[66]: problems as economic

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[65] The perplexities in this regard concern not only the idea that the State-centric system has been superseded (given the supposed demise of the Nation-State), but also, and especially, the notion of a "stateless federalism" (*à la* Althusius). This perspective, in fact, risks leaving a "political vacuum" created by the presumed obsolescence of the Nation-State. Indeed, according to Otto von Gierke [1880], sovereignty does not dissolve but is redefined in Althusius, especially with reference to Bodin's doctrine. Were this not so, the "political vacuum" would swallow the functional imperatives of self-government and political obligation – associated with which is the need for any form of *political* community to possess its own criteria of "inclusion/exclusion" (definition of "who we are") and of "obedience/disobedience" (definition of "who commands" and "whom to obey") – criteria that have to do, in other words, with the definition of membership and "recognition" of the chain of command (of its procedures, institutions, and contents).

[66] "Authoritative" in the sense of being endowed with legitimate binding power *erga omnes*. See Easton [1953].

and financial crisis; employment and social protection; allocation of rights and duties of citizenship; political participation, representation and democratic pluralism; collective security and public order; management of international balances and crises. It is probably for this reason that citizens seem particularly attached to the Nation-State in comparison with other political-territory spaces. Consequently, neither can the notions of a "Europe of regions" or of "regionalization of the globalized space" challenge the Nation-State model. The centuries-long formation process of the Nation-State aids understanding of how its success lies in the strength and distinctiveness of its identitary system. This also explains why the Nation-State is able to respond to critical moments, when it proves able to draw on surprising resources in order to deal with identitary challenges.

8. On the "value" of national identity

The continuing centrality of the Nation-State and national identity also depend on the "good reasons" in their favor. These "good reasons" are linked to democracy viewed as a "political value" (or as a "meta public good").

Historically, the Nation-State has been the "container" of democracy, that is, the political space in which democratization has taken place. The Nation-State is obviously not the only historical container of democracy, but it has certainly been the one best equipped to develop mass liberal democracy and its "constitutive elements" [see Nevola 2007a]. This means not so much that the Nation-State is the only environment favourable to democracy as that the establishment and consolidation of a democracy take place in a political space that has already been "unified". The type of political unity may change over time, but unification remains the necessary condition for democracy [see Dahl 1990; Linz, Stepan 1996; Nevola 2007a].

Democracy is, among other things, the acceptance of differences and divisions; it is freedom, pluralism and competition. The individuals and groups that form a democracy may divide and enter into conflict with each other but only once

they have defined "who they are": in other words, after they have established themselves as the "we" that comprises the variety of ideas and interests sustained by those individuals and groups [see Rokkan 1999; Walzer 1983; Dahl 1990; Linz, Stepan 1996]. This close and virtuous interdependence between the "unified political space" (Nation-State) and the "pluralist political space" (democracy) does not concern solely the moment of genesis of a democratic system. The subsequent practice of democratic citizenship itself requires the precious resource of national identity so that it can be nourished and provide citizens with "benefits and rights" and allocate right and duties. This argument is related to the view of democratic citizenship as a "meta public good"; and like any other public good, democracy entails "costs and duties" in its production, allocation and distribution [see Nevola 1994a]. Within this theoretical framework we have to underline that a political community preserves its democratic integration and legitimation on the condition that it safeguards some essential factors of "civic co-living": freedom of expression and neutrality/certainty of law; division and balance of powers; political equality, pluralism and representation; monetary transfers and services for a minimum level of well-being and social security [see Nevola 1994a]. These elements of "civic co-living" represent "benefits" for the citizens (the variety of rights and goods). But maintaining and nourishing the "benefits" provided by a democratic citizenship system requires that a political community must have members willing to assume the relative "costs". In this case we refer to "costs" such as tolerance of diversity; lawful behavior and compliance with rules; political participation and democratic vigilance; taxation and voluntary work [see Nevola 1994a]. When (or if) this balance between benefits and costs (rights and duties) is lacking, or comes under strong pressure, the survival of democracy is at risk, or it may decline in quality. On this view, the citizenship benefits/costs balance refers to a "critical threshold": that is, it refers to minimum levels of citizen willingness to support the costs of civic-democratic cohabitation. Below this threshold, the allocation of the benefits and the conditions themselves for a political-democratic system are at risk.

The problem of the "critical threshold" formulated in terms of costs/benefits and their balance shows that democracy possesses

a "utilitarian structure" for the production and allocation of public goods. However, "democratic utilitarianism" may sometimes be inefficient or ineffective, or at any rate unable to achieve the objective pursued. "Democratic authoritarianism" [see Almond, Powell 1966, 2th edition 1978] is an alternative to the democratic utilitarianism sometimes employed by democratic regimes. But there is a further resource that a democratic community can use before it resorts to solutions of "democratic authoritarianism": it is precisely this resource that is denoted with the notion of "political identity". By virtue of their "belonging resources", groups and individuals assume costs and duties in the production of democratic citizenship which exceed their own benefits and rights: that is, they "pay" in terms of attitudes and conducts, time and money for others unable or unwilling to do so. An important role in such a situation is played by political identity and its dimensions: reciprocal recognition, loyalty, solidarity, trust, civicness[67].

The "sense of belonging", as we know, may assume different features, some more "universalistic", others more "particularistic"[68]. But one of its typical political (and usually territorial) forms is certainly the Nation-based one. This form has historically predominated in the Western world, at least in the last two or three centuries. The maturation or the deficit of a sense of national belonging consequently involve, positively or negatively, the sources ("virtues") of "reciprocity" on which a political community can count to maintain the balance between costs and benefits (rights and duties) in the production and allocation of the public good represented by democratic citizenship[69].

But what is the specific feature to which the concept of *national* identity/belonging refers? National identity is a case of political

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[67] Eisenstadt [1999] has stressed the intimate connection among democracy, trust, collective identity and Nation.

[68] In the former case inspired by criteria regulating inclusion, such as, for example, agreement-aimed dialogical *Diskurs*, the "veil of ignorance" in "its original position", the competences of rationality and argumentative neutrality, and human rights. See, respectively, Habermas [1981; 1992]; Rawls [1971]; Ackerman [1984]; Bobbio [1990]. In the latter case inspired, for instance, by criteria regulating territorial inclusion (the local community) or functional inclusion (the social class). See on the one hand, Shils [1993]; Etzioni [1995]; on the other, Parkin [1979]; Esping-Andersen [1985].

[69] In this context it is useful to recall the concept of "civic virtues". See e. g. Dagger [1997].

identity on a territorial basis – a successful historical case that has prevailed over its territory-identitary rivals. Although a national identity requires the existence of "shared" elements (of various kinds), this does not entail that a national political community is necessarily "homogenous", "totalitarian" or "exclusive". Sharing and identification reflect the existence of a "connective texture" (socio-cultural, ethical-political, institutional, symbolic) resulting from "strings" of different colours. The role of such a texture is to hold together even pluralist and conflictual societies like the contemporary ones. In light of such recognition of the political pluralism it becomes decisive, when we talk about fatherland and Nation, to distinguish between a "democratic patriotism" and a "totalitarian patriotism"[70].

It is clear that not all Nation-States are democratic. Nor are they all fertile ground for democracy: in so far as they are successful *political units*, they are *necessary* but *not sufficient* conditions for the birth and growth of democratic systems. Moreover, not all types of national identity prove to be fruitful resources for democracy. National identity may in fact assume, and has done so in history, different features. In the past as well as the present we find national identities that are closed, exclusive, monist, mono-ethnic. These are national identities "dissonant" or "regressive" with respect to the principles of democratic pluralism. However, since the end of the XVIII century (see in particular the United States, France) an open and inclusive type of national identity has progressively imposed itself – also in regard to ethnic and cultural differences. This is the case of the so-called "civic-political" Nation, the "Nation of citizens" or "constitutional patriotism".

Despite its problems and its limitations, the Nation-State, with its political-identitary profile, has proved able to respond positively to the requirements of modern democracy. In many cases the Nation-State has also passed the democratization test. By contrast, the democratic test seems more problematic for the political project of radical independentist regionalism.

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[70] For a socio-political analysis of the bonds of patriotic identity and national belonging see the important and unjustly forgotten Grodzins [1956], which draws, with subtlety and a wealth of examples, an original distinction between democratic patriotism and totalitarian patriotism with interesting implications for the most genuine meaning to be attributed to "constitutional patriotism". See Nevola [2003c].

Some regionalisms seek to give life to new political units through the separation of a regional area from the Nation-State. Opposed to the multicultural, multi-ethnic or multi-national features of the Nation-State, they emphasis their own particular identities characterized by cultural or ethnic homogeneity. If successful, this kind of regional claim would create political regimes failing the democracy test. It would do so because along this route there would emerge political regimes of "ethnocratic" type characterized by a total liberal-democratic deficit; or "ethnodemocratic" regimes characterized by a milder liberal-democratic deficit. A further case still remains: that of regionalisms which seek to create new political units open to the many faces of democratic pluralism. But in this case their claims for self-determination and self-government cannot be coherently founded on solely ethnic or historical-cultural homogeneous bases. These would be regionalisms which put themselves forward as new democratic Nation-States on a smaller scale. This scenario poses the problem of the "dimensions" of the political democratic unit: a classic problem in both democratic history and doctrines (Johannes Althusius, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, James Madison) [see Dahl 1990].

Probably the best argument for the advocates of "small-scale democracy" is that, in small units, political processes are closer to citizens and it is possible to achieve a more immediate and solid collective solidarity. Even presuming that these positive aspects are welcome for the equality of a democratic system, they still entail other problematic aspects for collective life: fragmentation of the international system into numerous small units, which increases the likelihood of conflict; greater difficulties in the governance of international problems; the weakness of political units in their relationships with other units; low structural and functional differentiation of society; limits on the ability to produce public goods responding to the current standards of contemporary developed societies. Finally, the good principle of the proximity of citizens to the decision-making system can be realized within a federal arrangement as well.

From all this derives a deficit of political identity and a certain "democratic ambiguity" in the regional alternative to the Nation-State. And Nation-State persists in contemporary politics,

revealing to be the best option that citizens have in their hands when they look at organizing in a democratic way their public life.

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Politics, Identity, Territory. The “Strength” and “Value” of Nation-State, the Weakness of Regional Challenge

Gaspare Nevola

The post Cold War age reveals itself as being characterized mostly by the flourishing of “identity politics”. Identitary issues affect the public dimension of collective life and they often develop into economic, legal, political terms. There are many types of collective identity. We would clarify some of them in order to focus the analytical tools that are necessary to face the phenomena we are interested with: national and regional identities. Crucial in our argument are the concept of “political identity” and its “territorial” dimension. This concept and this dimension consent to compare Nation-State and (sub-national) region as space of collective life, and their “authoritative” degree. According to this subject this essay will treat the following points: the return of identity politics nowadays (section 1); the concept of collective identity (section 2); the many faces of collective identity (section 3); the relationship among politics, territory and identity, analyzed through the paradigmatic case of Nation-state and national identity (section 4); the structuring of political space between centre and peripheries, where we consider how the dominance of Nation-State model has to face persisting of territorial cleavages (section 5); the case of the regional issue (section 6); the “strength” and the “value” of Nation-State (sections 7 and 8).

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