**nation (state)/国(Guó)**

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The very fact that there are differences in the English and French versions of our keyword indicates already that it is difficult to construct a unified understanding for all of Europe and then contrast this with an equally homogeneous Chinese understanding of a term that has raised so many disputed in the intellectual history of Europe and the world.

With regard to the "nation," in large parts of Europe the idea has long prevailed that this nation has long historical roots that go back far before the modern era. This nation had its origins in a common language, which was the expression of dense kinship relations and corresponding demarcation from other groups, and in a common culture and history based on this. This version of the understanding of nation places historically the origin of nation-building before the process of territorialization and the formation of modern statehood. Often, it is associated with references to the language of the Middle Ages and the early modern period, when students enrolled and organized themselves in European universities along divisions into *nations*.

This has dramatically changed probably around 1983, when three important books by Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, and Eric Hobsbawm/ Terence Ranger appeared, all arguing along the same lines: for these authors, the nation was an "imagined community" (Anderson) invented only in the second half of the nineteenth century (Hobsbawm and Ranger) and, consequently, must be seen primarily as a construction rather than a reality preceding community-building (Gellner). In this version, then, the nation came into being relatively insistently, or was just invented, although the reference to "invention" did not at all mean that this process was not effective and considered by many to be a reality. In this version, territorialization and the process of modern state formation begins well before the invention of the nation, the construct of the nation is a reaction to crisis of these processes caused by global connections and competition.

The connection between nation and territorialization is thus central, but precisely not unambiguous; it is judged quite differently, and this has consequences for the understanding of nation and nation-state. By territorialization we understand a process of the formation of administrative structures of modern statehood (which is not based solely on kinship relations), the building of infrastructures of transport and communication, and the formation of a clearly drawn border (more and more recognizable as a line on contemporary maps), which takes the place of large transition zones (frontiers) between the settlement areas. This delimitation of a territory by a clearly linear, i.e. unambiguous, demarcation had as a prerequisite the clarification of overlapping legal relationships both in the realm of land ownership and feudal jurisdiction and at the same time drove them forward. Land ownership and the feudal legal authorities that confirmed it became less and less divergent in the course of the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, but were brought to extensive congruence within the framework of a territory, even if this process was far from complete by the end of the eighteenth century as Charles Maier (2016)has shown in his summary of the process even for France, one of them most advanced societies in this regard. This protracted, sometimes violent, and very often law-breaking process, however, followed the normative notion of a homogeneous territory, which, according to the research of Stuart Elden (2013), had been formulated since the early 17th century and was becoming more and more widespread: a clearly delimited territory with a well-defined population that organized its internal communication and internal mobility by means of territorialization and was controlled by an authority. This control was extended and expressed in the increase of the tax burden that the population (or the non-privileged parts of it) paid to the state for the further advancement of territorialization, the reduction of violence and lawlessness within, and for protection against external enemies. This state is also called territorial or military-fiscal state. In legal terms, it was generally an empire (of greater or lesser size) characterized by dynastic rule legitimized by the divine right and allowing only limited participation by small segments of the population (the privileged).

It was not until the French Revolution that this concept was fundamentally changed, with the sovereignty of the people replacing dynastic legitimacy in 1789. The people, from whom all power was to emanate and who now intervened in the affairs of government, were early called a nation, after the representatives of the third estate in the *Etats Généraux* invited the representatives of the privileged estates to a joint meeting as an "assemblée nationale" and brusquely opposed the king.

At the beginning, however, this nation by no means had a clear territorial connotation; rather, the French Republic appointed honorary citizens from (almost) all over the world because they had rendered outstanding services to freedom. In the wars of 1792-1815, however, an identification of state and nation increasingly prevailed over the cosmopolitan idea of a single universal nation made up of apostles of liberty.

In most histories, the Revolution of 1789 appears as the founding moment of modern European nation-building, subsequently imitated elsewhere. What dominates in this narrative is a democratic understanding of the nation that brings together citizenship and statehood. The constitution constitutes the nation; all those who have the right to participate according to its standards belong to the nation. As an alternative to this democratic understanding of nation, the idea of a cultural nation developed, especially in German-speaking Central Europe, in which the nation is not created by the constitution, but exists as a community on the basis of blood relationship and ties to the soil long before the unified state is created, as happened with the German Empire in 1871. On this basis, the idea that the nation-state was the only valid unit for social self-organization under the global condition took hold around 1900. All other processes of spatialization were subordinated to this idea and self-observations of societies were organized accordingly. Statistics were collected for nation-states, institutions like national libraries, theatres, operas, museums, academies etc etc reinforced the impression that the nation was the natural framework of all social action and the nation-state the natural amphora for the nation. This methodological nationalism underlies most of the humanities and social sciences since the emergence of the many disciplines around the turn from the 19th to the 20th century. The knowledge order, these disciplines represent, is not the result of an observation and analysis of the nation or the nation-state at all, but contributed massively to its invention. All other spatial formats were subordinated to the national: the local and regional appeared as part of the nation, all external relations were conceptualized as inter-national relations. And what did not correspond to this scheme at all, the US-American Bournes for example then called a transnational nation in 1916. We are still trapped today in this methodological nationalism, reminiscent of the famous quotation according to which someone "who has as a tool only a hammer ... sees in every problem a nail." This has defined much of the 20th century, in which attempts at liberation from external oppression and any desire for democratic conditions were understood as nation-building worldwide. The frustration when, after several decades, there is still no success in terms of welfare, participation and stability usually leads to conflicts between different concepts of nation-building (from centralist to federal), but not to a doubt about the concept of the nation-state.

However, several complications arise here, which this overly simple but nevertheless extremely popular story from “empire to nation-state” leaves out. The result of the revolutionary period between 1780 and 1830 was by no means the emergence of nation-states in which all citizens were equal, but rather a new type of combination of empire and nation-state: more or less democratic in the metropolis, but discriminating against the inhabitants of the colonies, whether they were the inhabitants of Ireland or Haiti. In the results of this condensation moment of global interaction that encompassed the Atlantic, as well as the Indian and Pacific Oceans (Forrest 2020; Sivasundaram 2020), a new spatial format emerged, namely the nation-state with imperial extensions (Maruschke/ Middell 2019). This spatial format proved itself over the next century and a half at least, if not two centuries, as an appropriate form of response to the global condition. Great Britain, France, the United States, Russia, Spain, Portugal, but also Japan followed this path, which is largely absent from European consciousness. While the history of nation and nation-state in Europe is discussed as a model for nation-building outside Europe, the most powerful states have de facto constituted themselves as imperial nations (Fradera 2018) or indeed as nation-states with an imperial extension and only very slowly decolonized.

This has been discussed in recent historiography not only with regard to relations between metropolises and colonies, but also with regard to relations between capital/center on the one hand and provinces on the other. Some time ago, the French historian Pierre Serna characterized what has often been described as integration into the nation-state as an imperial over-forming of the provinces, which were to be deprived of their autonomy and cultural distinctiveness. This idea underlies many political movements for cultural autonomy or even political secession-from Scotland to Catalonia.

As postcolonial critiques of imperialism in the world increase, this critical attitude toward the unitarian state, which presents itself as a nation-state and thus obscures its historical fault lines, is likely to intensify. There are therefore different prognoses for the nation-state. Some consider it to be the anchor of sovereignty and democracy, because only within its framework can social cohesion and democratic participation be brought into balance. Others consider it to be an expiring model, because it is coming under fire from two different sides as a result of the growing number of transnational interdependencies and criticism of its repressive character toward growing minorities and particularistic identities. For the moment, however, this dispute stands undecided, for neither have the doomsayers come true, nor do we live in a world of nation-states sealed off from one another. But is seems very likely that its importance will be at least heavily relativized to other spatial formats such as transnational and transregional chains and networks, the growing importance of cities and regions, and supranational alliances as well as the new regionalism which in fact becomes the major pillar of global governance these days.