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THE CONFOUNDING STATE: PUBLIC IGNORANCE AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

ABSTRACT: *Agencies of the modern state, democratic and otherwise, manufacture pliant publics through sophisticated social-scientific technologies ranging from wealth redistribution (which defines the contours of social relations) to the institutionalization of ethnicity (which exploits sociocultural cleavages for a variety of often contradictory purposes). The very sophistication of these technologies defies comprehension; that is, it engenders and exacerbates public ignorance. As a result, democratic surveillance of state power is more enabling myth than fact.*

According to Max Weber's definition—still the most insightful and precise—the state is that agency to which a society gives the monopoly of legitimate violence. "Legitimate," of course, is the crucial modifier. In order to avoid violent uprisings or sustained civil disobedience, coercive authority must be looked upon as just or, failing that, inescapable. Authority must be made natural, a move that requires discursive as well as temporal power. Consent is crucial; in its absence, bureaucratic rule can be an expensive proposition. For democratic states, the question of consent is particularly important; in the American tradition, the "consent of the governed" is *the* source of state legitimacy, an ideological understanding that is widely held. Indeed, the corresponding logic of "popular sovereignty" and self-government suggests that a democratic mass

public, through its representatives, must control the levers of power. As a result, pervasive public ignorance, recorded time and again in countless studies, poses a formidable problem for partisans of the classical democratic faith.

Consider, then, the following model. Modern democratic societies, nigh all of which are "imagined communities" with great internal heterogeneity and, by definition, social complexity, defy the deliberative paradigm of consent achieved through communicative action, due to mass public ignorance and incomprehension; instead, consent is manufactured, it is an ideological effect of administrative power. The means by which consent is manufactured include the institutionalization of ethnicity and the creation of a welfare-state apparatus that meets social needs and mitigates social conflict, including challenges to state authority. But these institutions require a level of technical expertise that necessarily precludes the possibility of mass comprehension. The state confounds both any active Weberian legitimacy and any effective attempts at resistance. In this essay, I offer a tentative outline of this process, situating it within the existing literature on ethnic identity and providing illustrative examples.

From Fear to Allegiance

Rather than look upon the state as little more than an arena for the interplay of socioeconomic forces and conflicts—a view that corresponds well to the liberal normative idealization—a generation of social thinkers often known as "the new institutionalists," led by Theda Skocpol among others, have argued that the state is, in fact,

> a set of administrative, policing, and military organizations headed by an executive authority. Any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create and support coercive and administrative organizations. (Skocpol 1979, 29.)

As such, states have a capacity for autonomy from various social forces, including the dominant social class, a capacity that varies across geopolitical and economic circumstances (ibid., 29–30).

Following in the realist tradition of Weber, Skocpol spends relatively little time on legitimacy as an explanatory concept: provided that the state is successful in maintaining order, key social groups will, in most

instances, accept its legitimacy, whether understood as "moral approval or in the probably much more usual sense of sheer acceptance of the status quo" (Skocpol 1979, 32). Loss of legitimacy due to a failure to cope with existing tasks is to be avoided, but needn't be fatal to the state provided its coercive powers remained intact—that is, provided the state remains capable of subduing rebellions (ibid.).

In focusing on revolutionary challenges to premodern states, Skocpol emphasizes the importance of military capacity, which can make the difference between a weak state that fails and a strong state that succeeds in suppressing challenges to its authority; and financial capacity, which fuels military capacity and reduces a state's reliance on independent social forces. Instilling fear in the hearts of those who would contest the state's primacy is the essential function of state power at this stage. The key post-revolutionary transformation in France, Russia, and China, Skocpol maintains, was the advent of strengthened states, "more centralized, bureaucratic, and autonomously powerful" (Skocpol 1979, 285) than those that had come before, a fact that appears to bolster Weber's claim that "revolutions function in the end to further bureaucratic domination, all the more inevitably so to the extent that they establish state controls over the economy"(ibid., 286).

Though Skocpol doesn't embrace Weber's hypothesis in *States and Social Revolutions*, she acknowledges its salience (ibid., 286–87). At the end of this study, Skocpol speculates that a social revolution in an advanced industrial society would be very different from those that occurred in premodern France, Russia, and China, because "it seems highly unlikely that modern states could disintegrate as administrative-coercive organizations without destroying societies at the same time"(ibid., 293). This observation, nothing more than an aside, tentatively suggests that there has been a shift in the source of state power. In advanced industrial societies, state power is intimately bound together with the fabric of social life.

Beyond coercive power—a factor that can, in a democratic society, be looked upon as external to the workings of "the public sphere"—there is a kind of state power that shapes society itself. This is a process designed to enhance state autonomy through "state projects of legibility and simplification," as described by James Scott in *Seeing Like a State* (1998). Just as George Orwell's Newspeak minimized the possibility of revolt by manipulating human language, with its infinite cognizable and manageable potentialities, state power, dedicated to

preserving order and extracting resources, has often been used to control and limit the grammar of protest. Counterdiscourses and moments of dissent are reimagined and assimilated into existing structures as stable enemies, a process described in the work of Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward (1979). Moreover, the agencies that turn citizens into clients of state power, in the process standardizing and simplifying countless different forms of life, employ techniques so sophisticated and specialized as to defy effective comprehension, let alone control, on the part of the mass public: dissent is mollified *and* informational burdens are created in such a way as to make pervasive public ignorance inevitable. This may be more crucial to the autonomy of modern democratic states than even fear of armed reprisals from the state's coercive agencies. Consider, for example, the welfare state in contemporary democratic societies.

The Welfare State as Source of Autonomy and Ignorance

As Iris Marion Young (2000, 247) argues, most theorizing about social justice focuses on the distribution of material goods and resources, in large part because

> public political dispute in welfare corporate society is largely restricted to issues of taxation, and the allocation of social funds among competing interests. Public discussions of social injustice tend to revolve around inequalities of wealth and income, and the extent to which the state can or should mitigate the suffering of the poor.

Young believes that in assuming this institutional context, the distributive paradigm avoids noticing specific institutional structures, including bureaucracies and welfare agencies that are separated from the day-to-day lives of the vast majority (ibid., 249). In his observations on the colonization of the lifeworld, Jürgen Habermas offers a related criticism of the manner in which money and administrative power trump and undermine rational public discussion. The stratification of decision-making power found in modern democratic societies is, according to Young, assumed in most contemporary philosophical discussions. For Young (2000, 250), economic domination is not simply a function of inequality of wealth or income; it derives "as much from corporate and legal structures and procedures that give some persons the power to

make decisions"—precisely the inequality between those who hold the levers of state power and those who do not. More often than not, authors in the tradition Young criticizes neglect the autonomy of the state, assuming, in line with liberal normative ideals, that the state is nothing more than an arena for various social groups that responds to them mechanically without prerogatives of its own.

If we accept, however, that states can indeed be autonomous, what is it that motivates states, that animates the institutional context masked by the distributive paradigm Young describes? In *The Grabbing Hand* (1998), economists Andrei Shleifer and Robert Vishny offer an answer. Reflecting on economists' conventional views of the state, Shleifer and Vishny (1998, 2) first dismiss the "helping-hand" model, which advocates "massive state intervention in markets to cure so-called market failures," because in reality "governments pursue interventions such as state ownership and agricultural supports that serve their political goals and only occasionally coincide with social welfare" (ibid., 3). Ignoring state autonomy, the helping-hand model assumes that the state seeks to maximize social welfare rather than its own power or well-being. In a similar vein, the authors reject the invisible-hand model, the view that the state should ignore all but the core functions of public administration (such as law, order, and national defense)—a prescriptive model that has little to say about the real world because it again ignores the state's own imperatives, rendering its policy prescriptions unrealistic. Instead, the authors offer their own grabbing-hand model, a view that centers on the appetites of an autonomous state and assumes that agents of the state "do not maximize social welfare and instead pursue their own selfish objectives" (ibid., 4).

Skocpol (1992, 527) reaches a similar, albeit less harsh, conclusion: "Acting in pursuit of their career interests . . . leaders try to use existing governmental and party organizations to devise and implement policies that will attract support from various social groups"—hardly a description of disinterested state action oriented solely towards meeting real human needs. Indeed, a cynic would argue that leaving certain populations in dependent and impoverished conditions might prove efficacious in advancing state power. A welfare-state apparatus that functions smoothly and efficiently can routinize and thus effectively legitimate such a state of affairs. Social groups that would otherwise pose a challenge to existing hierarchies can be mollified. Under these conditions, there would be virtually no social space free

of state domination, so meaningful democratic control of the state would be effectively impossible.

The welfare state, according to Habermas (1985, 351), secures "the pacification of the sphere of social labor and the neutralization of participation in the political decision-making processes." "There is a guaranteeing of freedom embodied in the welfare state, particularly insofar as it lessens the tyranny of deprivation, and at the same time a taking away of freedom" (ibid., 361). The very bureaucratization that enables an effective social–welfare policy serves as a "restructuring intervention in the lifeworld" (ibid., 362). Quoting E. Reidegold, Habermas notes that programs ostensibly aimed at promoting independence by reducing physical deprivation actually reduce independence due to the nature of bureaucratic authority:

> "The process of providing social services takes on a reality of its own, nurtured above all by the professional competence of public officials, the framework of administrative action, biographical and current 'findings,' the readiness and ability to cooperate of the person seeking the service or being subjected to it. In these areas too there remain problems with the class-specific utilization of such services, with the assignments made by the courts, the prison system and other offices, and with the appropriate location and arrangement of the services within the network of bureaucratic organizations of the welfare state; but beyond this, such forms of physical, psycho-social and emancipatory aid really require modes of operation, rationality criteria and organizational forms that are foreign to bureaucratically structured administration." (Quoted in Habermas 1985, 363.)

The sophistication, and insulation, of effective welfare bureaucracies is inextricably linked with patterns of social control. As Hugh Heclo argues in *Modern Social Politics in Britain and Sweden* (1974), the crucial contributors to the development of social-welfare programs in those countries have been civil-service administrators, individuals with a vast amount of specialized knowledge, rather than political leaders or even external interest groups. Though we can imagine a benevolent post-bureaucratic welfare state truly geared toward securing real freedom for all, the grabbing-hand model suggests that this end is unlikely: self-interested agents of the state, and the autonomous state itself, have no reason to pursue such an agenda.

Gellnerian Reflections on State and Nation

Though fear alone will prevent rebellions, it will also prevent the extractive and regulatory feats modern states, which control some of the most intimate aspects of our lives and command vast resources for welfare-state and other redistributive purposes. To insinuate itself into every dimension of life, the state must secure the active cooperation of the public. By securing the allegiance of the mass public by redistributing income and institutionalizing ethnicity, the state dramatically increases its ability to control society. In his theory of nationalism, Ernest Gellner (1983) suggests that social-scientific technologies such as these, techniques that make the lived lives of ordinary women and men comprehensible to bureaucracies, are integral to the modern state.

For Gellner (1983, 5), the industrial era is defined by the presence of the state, which plays the crucial role in the transition from agro-literate to modern society. In agro-literate societies, horizontal cultural cleavages, between the rulers and ruled for example, are advantageous (ibid., 11). Such societies are both mobile and stable, and so there is no need for a monochrome homogeneity to allow societies to withstand the pressures of mobility (ibid., 12–13). Modern industrial societies, in contrast, rely on sustained and perpetual growth (ibid., 22). An ever-changing, complex division of labor is needed to achieve this end, which, in turn, demands "frequent and precise communication among strangers involving a sharing of explicit meaning" (ibid., 34), undermining old social hierarchies and horizontal cultural cleavages (ibid., 24–25). The ideal of universal literacy results, which in turn requires centralized methods of social reproduction based on universal, standardized, and generic education (ibid., 29). The relationship between these methods and nationalism is clear: a single national language is taught to all, facilitating the division of labor; the "roots of nationalism in the distinctive structural requirements of industrial society are very deep indeed" (ibid., 35). Gellner argues that cultural homogeneity is thus the product of an "objective, inescapable imperative [of industrialization that] eventually appears on the surface in the form of nationalism" (ibid., 39).

Gellner's theory identifies one manner in which the state acts independently of social groups to achieve its ends. In the process the state defies public comprehension by constituting the public itself—a crucial function of the confounding state. Unfortunately, Gellner's

theory of nationalism is tied to a very mechanistic model: the institutionalization of ethnicity must, he hypothesizes, take the form of a culturally homogenizing drive. In some instances, however, as we shall see, states reinforce and even manufacture cultural differences in order to facilitate their control.

The State in Society

For Joel Migdal and others identified with the "state-in-society" approach, state-centered theories suffer from a holistic and undifferentiated view of the state, a view that, *in extremis*, reifies and anthropomorphizes the state such that "the dynamics of the struggle for domination in societies" (Migdal 1994, 8) is obscured. Migdal (ibid.) maintains that undifferentiated understandings of state and society lead us to believe that these monoliths "pull in single directions." Through this prism, state/society conflicts appear to be zero-sum games; moreover, both state and society act according to a coherent logic.

In contrast, Migdal (1994, 9) calls upon scholars to disaggregate state and society and focus on a society's "multiple arenas of domination and opposition," arenas that are often far from the commanding heights of state organizations. State power thus becomes a continuum, an indeterminate quantity that varies across physical and social space in response to distinctive pressures from diverse social forces. Peripheral conflicts between state agents and social forces are mutually transforming. According to Migdal, these struggles can lead to outcomes ranging from *integrated domination*, in which the state does emerge as a coherent actor with broad power, to *dispersed domination*, in which power is vigorously contested and the state is diffuse and divided. Rather than focus on the various ways the state's machine-like bureaucratic apparatus accomplishes ends to which it is inexorably drawn, Migdal (ibid., 12) emphasizes the formulation and transformation of state goals, a process that derives from sustained engagement with different social forces.

While this approach has great value, it mustn't distract us from the central role of public ignorance in enhancing democratic state autonomy. When the state holds most of the cards, informational and otherwise, and determines the contours of the playing field, it will tend to be autonomous and it will tend to secure its ends to the extent its technologies allow. Emphasis on struggle and the internal hetero-

geneity of the state itself does, however, shed light on substate conflicts. What happens of we try to illuminate these conflicts by comparing recent normative defenses of "the politics of identity" to a perspective on state autonomy informed by empirical research on public ignorance?

Managing the Body Politic

In light of the global resurgence of nationalist politics, countless scholars have followed Gellner's lead and turned their attention to nations and nationalism. Whereas the nation was once looked upon as an unproblematic and transhistorical phenomenon, the scholarship of Benedict Anderson (1988), Anthony D. Smith (1988), Liah Greenfeld (1993), Homi Bhabha (1990), and Partha Chatterjee (1993), among others, has challenged its privileged position. Though this new scholarship is characterized by myriad doctrinal disputes, it is defined by a common acceptance of the nation as an "imagined community," a collectivity based on shared historical memories and cultural experiences, not blood or soil. Nationhood, according to Rogers Brubaker (1996, 21), is "an institutionalized cultural and political form," and nations are a practical category, not conscious, purposeful collective actors. Indeed, Brubaker, in advocating an institutionalist approach to the study of nationalism, goes so far as to claim that nationness is "a contingent event or happening, and [one should] refrain from using the analytically dubious notion of 'nations' as substantial, enduring collectivities" (ibid.).

   While one may fairly criticize Brubaker and those who share his approach, including Gellner, for going too far—after all, ethnocultural communities defined by shared language and cultural traditions, while not always institutionalized as nations, certainly are "substantial and enduring"—he does offer a useful antidote to those who look upon nations as unchanging and easily defined. National identity does not reflect a prior, primordial collective self; rather, it is part of a fluid network of representations distinguished by its privileged place—one owed to the primacy of the territorial, sovereign nation-state (Duara 1995, 229). This being the case, we may be better served by speaking of the *national* rather than the nation, for in a world of polyethnic and polylinguistic states, states are more often framed by nationhood than perfectly congruent with ethnocultural nations. In looking upon the national community as a symbolic system defined by shifting bound-

aries, a site of cultural negotiation, we can more easily grasp the evolving character of national identity and its rival narratives.

In Canada, Spain, India, Nigeria, and Britain, among many other states, the accommodation of cultural difference has involved various forms of *asymmetrical federalism*, that is, federal or subsidiary arrangements in which "privileges are accorded to different territories and groups" (Steyn 1999, 22–23). Other states, however, have resisted this strategic creation of collective cultural rights as an illiberal innovation that undermines state coherence and cohesion. The institutionalization (and politicization) of cultural collectivities, and the concomitant "ethnicization" of constitutional politics, creates a directional and enduring logic all its own that facilitates the state's "management of the body politic"; that is, it structures ethnicity in such a way as to make it cognizable to the state's language of power.

In this light, normative defenses of different versions of the politics of identity propounded by such political theorists as Habermas and Charles Taylor appear naïve, at best.

The Power of Identity

In "The Politics of Recognition," Taylor offers a revision of liberalism designed to accommodate demands for collective cultural rights and recognition, demands that, in his view, derive from the harm caused by the *mis*recognition and *non*recognition of dispossessed cultural communities (Taylor 1994, 24). These demands are theoretically justified by the ideal of "authenticity," articulated early on by Rousseau and Herder, which offers a portrait of an individual living in accordance with that individual's unique inner nature; upon achieving this harmony with self, an individual—or, for Herder, also a culture-bearing people—attains the goal of self-fulfillment and self-realization: "dignity" (ibid., 31).

For Taylor, the ideals of authenticity and dignity are historical products of the demise of enduring social hierarchies. The theorizing of Herder and others, however, emphasized the monological dimension of achieving authenticity and dignity, an emphasis Taylor believes to be misplaced and misguided (Taylor 1994, 32). The process of becoming authentic human agents is fundamentally dialogical: to achieve an understanding of self and, as a result, a defined identity, one requires "rich human languages of expression" (ibid.). To acquire the modes of expression needed for self-definition, one must interact

with others; consequently, these interactions—a negotiation between the internal and the external—play a crucial role in shaping identity (ibid., 32–34). As a result, the equal recognition of individuals is of profound importance: without it, demeaning images imposed from without can be internalized and cause grave damage (ibid., 36).

But the politics of equal recognition leads not only to the universalization of civil and political rights and to equality before the law, but to the recognition of *difference*, that is, recognition of the unique identities of individuals and groups (Taylor 1994, 38). Taylor contends that the latter tendency "grows organically out of the politics of universal dignity," and he analogizes it to the social-welfarist recognition of economic deprivation as an obstacle to equal dignity to be corrected through redistributive interventions. Like the conflicts surrounding the establishment of social-welfarist regimes, the conflicts surrounding the politics of difference involve rival conceptions of nondiscrimination and "favoritism" (ibid., 39). Indeed, many proponents of a universalizing politics of equal recognition oppose the differential treatment required of a state oriented toward accepting and affirming difference. Taylor rejects their reasoning, embracing instead a second mode of the politics of equal recognition that fosters particularity and recognizes the extent to which "difference-blindness" is, in practice, impossible:

> These two modes of politics, then, both based on the notion of equal respect, come into conflict. . . . The reproach the first makes to the second is just that it violates the principle of nondiscrimination. The reproach the second makes to the first is that it negates identity by forcing people into a homogeneous mold that is untrue to them. This would be bad enough if the mold were itself neutral—nobody's mold in particular. But the complaint generally goes further. The claim is that the supposedly neutral set of difference-blind principles of the politics of equal dignity is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture. As it turns out, then, only the minority or suppressed cultures are being forced to take alien form. Consequently, the supposedly fair and difference-blind society is not only inhuman (because suppressing identities) but also, in a subtle and unconscious way, itself highly discriminatory. (Ibid., 43.)

Liberalism, as a result, cannot claim cultural neutrality (Taylor 1994, 62). To rescue liberalism, Taylor separates a narrow, procedural liberalism that always emphasizes individual rights over collective goals

(dubbed "Liberalism 1" by Michael Walzer) from a liberalism that cautiously accepts the privileging of collective goals while respecting diversity ("Liberalism 2"). The first liberalism, the "liberalism of rights," is inhospitable to difference, for it "insists on uniform application of the rules defining these rights" and "is suspicious of collective goals," including cultural survival—a collective goal that may require deviation from "universal" principles (ibid., 60–61). The second liberalism will defend certain rights under any and all circumstances, but is willing to weigh the claims of cultural survival and, presumably, cultural flourishing, against the principle of uniform treatment. In this regard, it abandons claims of ethical neutrality and allows the state to advance a form of the good life.

Habermas (1994, 109), in his critique of Taylor's "Politics of Recognition," contends that Taylor's second liberalism, rather than correcting an inappropriate understanding of liberal principles, in fact "calls into question the individualistic core of the modern conception of freedom." Taylor's attempt to consider "a politics of consideration of cultural differences on the one hand [against] a politics of universalization of individual rights on the other," the former compensating for "the price the other exacts with its equalizing universalism," produces, for Habermas, a false dichotomy (ibid., 111). For Habermas (1994, 112), the theory of rights, that is, "Liberalism 1," is not, when properly understood, blind to cultural differences. Since the bearers of individual rights possess identities that are determined intersubjectively, the system of rights must take into account cultural differences and unequal social conditions: "a correctly understood theory of rights requires a politics of recognition that protects the integrity of the individual in the life contexts in which his or her identity is formed" (ibid., 113). No alternative model is required for a consistent actualization of a theory of rights that will accommodate struggles for recognition. Though the theory of rights does maintain the precedence of individual rights over collective goals, the democratic elaboration of a system of individual rights involves and incorporates collective goals (ibid., 123–24). Habermas (ibid., 128) maintains that

> the theory of rights in no way forbids the citizens of a democratic constitutional state to assert a conception of the good in their general legal order, a conception they either already share or have come to agree on through political discussion. It does, however, forbid them to privilege one form of life at the expense of others within the nation.

This principle, moreover, holds at all levels of government in a federal polity, arguably weakening the claims of asymmetrical federalism. Above all else, Habermas is concerned with loyalty to a common liberal political culture. As a result, he champions a brand of constitutional patriotism that maintains a critical distinction between political integration and cultural assimilation; any state-sponsored wedding of the two would violate the claim of minorities to mutual recognition (Habermas 1994, 135). His concerns, like those of Taylor (a social democrat trying to maintain Canadian unity in the face of Québecois separatism), reflect his cultural milieu: faced with the legacy of illiberal German nationalism, Habermas is wary of surrendering an individualistically constructed theory of rights.

Habermas's argument regarding struggles for recognition is closely tied to his broader perspective on late modernity. The struggles for recognition that now animate the politics of the metropolitan West transcend traditional class conflicts over material distribution; the new conflicts take place in the lifeworld. Organized around communicative action, these new protest movements struggle over "the grammar of forms of life." Habermas sees in them an attempt to correct the modern "colonization of the lifeworld." Like earlier bourgeois emancipation movements, however, struggles for recognition essentially reinforce the modern conception of freedom.

Ordering and Unmixing Identities

Both Taylor and Habermas offer accounts of the multinational polity grounded primarily in liberal political theory. In his portrait of Soviet multinationality (1996), Rogers Brubaker, a sociologist, comes from a very different direction, one that is rooted in an understanding of the historical evolution of political institutions. This perspective, which provides both historical and geographical distance from contemporary struggles in the metropolitan West, provides valuable insight into the confounding strategies of modern states—even democratic states—that are embroiled in the politics of identity.

As the Great War drew to a close, the revolutionary transformations wrought by nationalizing autocracies in Eastern Europe came to fruition as new states emerged from the ashes of the old. Most of them, in line with the nationalist principles of the age, constituted themselves as national states, despite the many challenges posed by

unresolvable heterogeneity. One regime, in stark contrast, defined it-self in explicitly antinationalist, and indeed *post*national, terms. It is this regime, the Soviet Union, that Rogers Brubaker analyzes in "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States: An Institutionalist Account." For decades, the USSR stood as a revolutionary vanguard state, homeland to all the workers. Unlike the anti-nationalist dynastic regimes that once ruled the heart of Europe, the Soviet Union did not seek to suppress the discourse of nationality; rather, it sought to transcend it through the communist vision of universal human progress and liberation. In order to achieve this end, however, the Soviet state engineered an elaborate compro-mise with the principle of nationality, described by Brubaker as "institutionalized multinationality." This strategic compromise, wracked by internal contradictions and constitutive of oppositional national identities, ultimately led to the unraveling of the multinational Soviet enterprise.

Upon considering the events of 1991, one of the most remarkable facts is the manner in which the Soviet Union, one of the leading states in the international environment and a military power of great consequence, collapsed in such a rapid, orderly, and peaceful manner into fifteen sovereign national republics. Few battles were fought, and all declarations of sovereignty occurred in a decidedly legitimate manner under the banner of the Soviet Constitution. The nation-alisms that now asserted themselves against the center, curiously enough, were precisely those identified, articulated, and reified through the institutions of the Soviet state; indeed, some, like those of the Central Asian Union republics, had no pre-Soviet national history to point toward. Others, like those of the Baltic republics, have been described as more national in the wake of Soviet rule than they were before it. The nationalist counterelites that went on to consolidate their power found ready-made national institutions through which to govern their populations. The transition, though certainly fraught with many problems, was eased by the Soviet Union's seamless con-struction.

Though the Soviet Union did not define itself as a nation-state, it did define its constituent units in those terms; consequently, national cadres and national intelligentsias were cultivated in an effort to effect a kind of nation-building at the substate level. Just as the rulers of the Habsburg and Romanov empires unintentionally fostered the source of their own demise through their use of public violence and other

revolutionary techniques, the Soviets constructed national states that served as bases of opposition to the center and, potentially, as the locus of national longing. These Union republics, constituted from without but governed by members of the so-called titular nationalities, were implicitly empowered to continue the nation-building process. Through the use of state privileges, preference was often given to members of the titular nationality and representational technologies were employed to foster the use of its language (along with the Russian language, which was promoted as a broader medium of intellectual exchange). Though the Union republics were meant to be "national in form but socialist in content," they offered national elites opportunities for advancement predicated on nationhood, not allegiance to the communist notion of transcending the nation.

The territorial-political component of Soviet nationality policy, though perhaps the decisive factor in the collapse of the Soviet Union, was far from the sole element in its baroque construction. Soviet citizens were not merely citizens of their respective Union republics; each individual was also assigned by the state an explicit nationality, defined in ethnocultural terms. These designations were made on the basis of descent, not by subjective identification; though the children of mixed marriages were allowed to select their nationality, they were limited to those of their parents and could choose only once. The internal passports carried by all who sought employment, housing, or education identified individuals by nationality. Though at first a mere afterthought, the systematic codification of personal nationality became an integral, essential component of the Soviet management of its population. Moreover, to the extent that personal nationality had very real consequences for one's life chances, it was a matter of palpable importance that came to shape personal identity in decisive ways. Ethnocultural boundaries were established by the state in an ad hoc manner, but their constitution had many unintended consequences, including an irreconcilable cognizance of minority status for many of those in the nationalizing Union republics. The republics, in turn, often used these boundaries to facilitate their control.

The territorial-political and the ethnocultural-personal dimensions of Soviet nationality policy identified by Brubaker, though independent of one another, interacted in a complex manner. The logic of ethnoterritorial federalism led the Soviet state to establish semi-sovereign Union republics, autonomous republics, and autonomous oblasts that corresponded directly to many ethnocultural-personal

designations (including the curious Jewish Autonomous Region in the Russian Far East). Hence, each individual, in theory, had a homeland on Soviet territory shared by others of the same ethnic ancestry. The very existence of these territories strengthened the nationhood of these often-arbitrary ethnocultural categories. At the same time, there were often radical spatial disparities between one's nationality and one's place of residence. In the Union republics, large minorities were governed by members of the titular nationalities, and yet did not identify with them.

Rather than abolish ethnocultural-personal designations, or adopt consociational arrangements that would accommodate ethnocultural-personal designations but eliminate territorial-political definitions, the regime maintained both of these mutually antagonistic definitions of nationhood. The heterogeneity of many regions, coupled with these contending models of nationhood, invited conflict. Only by allowing the territorial-political units to pursue their nationalizing mission through assimilationist policies could this contradiction be resolved, and yet that was not a viable option. Due to the presence of the supranational Soviet state, which imagined itself as a postnational socialist commonwealth, national minorities—particularly the Russian minority in the non-Russian Union republics—could not be assimilated to the titular nationalities without raising Russians' ire. The cultural rights of minorities in the Union republics were protected by the Soviet state. These problems, which were to have been obviated on the path toward communism and a post-national Soviet People, proved vexing until the last days of the regime. Soviet nationality policy, often characterized as an elaborate ruse, did indeed construct and institutionalize nationalities for its own purposes; these designations, however, came to acquire very real lives of their own.

Due to its multinational construction, the Soviet Union, in theory, was always a highly decentralized state. The parallel structures of the centralized Communist party served to undergird the state by resisting fissiparous tendencies. With the party's collapse, the centrifugal forces wrought by increasing nationalist resistance to the authority of the center led to the end of Soviet Union. But the legacy of the Soviet state and its nationality policy remain. Indeed, Brubaker characterizes the legacy of Soviet nationality policy as essential to understanding the national question in the successor states.

The continuing prevalence of ethnocultural conceptions of personal nationality has turned the question of citizenship in the now-

sovereign national states into one of pressing importance. The "titu-
lar" nationalities, now rulers of their own sovereign states, operate on
the implicit assumption, inherited from the Soviet era, that the states
are the vehicles for *their* national self-determination, irrespective of
the degree of heterogeneity. The national minorities within these
states are now, if only figuratively, without homes. Though they may
be afforded the rights of liberal citizenship—and even that is a matter
of contestation—they are necessarily outsiders. The nationalizing en-
terprise, in theory, can now be pursued, and yet the realities of the in-
ternational realm limit this possibility. The fact that members of these
national minorities have been separated from their homelands has led
to both alienation and irredentist sentiments. The presence of large
national minorities, and the question of their loyalties, have in turn
produced stringent policies directed against them in several republics.
The dynamic of relationships between nationalizing states and their
national minorities has also doubtless been affected by a geopolitical
environment in which the Russian state—homeland, though not by
legal affiliation, of 25 million Russians in the so-called "Near
Abroad"—is overwhelmingly preponderant and, perhaps more worri-
some, potentially revisionist.

Brubaker, in considering this explosive combination, suggests that
post–Soviet Eurasia may well be a locus of severe ethnonational con-
flict due to the violent collision of mutually incompatible expecta-
tions of belonging. According to Brubaker, the Soviet regime, in its
efforts to transcend narrow nationalisms, constructed illiberal substate
nationalisms fundamentally based on blood, albeit unintentionally. By
codifying nationality as an essential, integral, and largely unchange-
able quality, Soviet nationality policy has left a legacy of political tur-
moil that derives from essential questions of identity and belong-
ing—questions that, as constituted, are essentially unresolvable in the
heterogeneous borderlands of Europe. Despite noble intentions, the
multinational enterprise failed due to its contradictions.

Brubaker's portrait presents the state as the agent of this failure.
Moreover, while the Soviet state was not a liberal democratic regime,
its constitutional structure did formally enshrine liberal democratic
principles; as a result, it serves as a salient case study of the autonomy
of the liberal state. Perhaps the main lesson to be drawn is that even
truly liberal state elites that are insulated by public ignorance from the
pressures of civil society must sometimes face dangerous unintended
consequences stemming from their autonomously enacted policies.

What is relevant, after all, is a state's use of ethnicity in an autonomous fashion, not the democratic/public-ignorance or autocratic/public-exclusion source of the state's autonomy. But before turning to some suggestive evidence from democratic states, let us first consider the ethnic policies of another autocracy, the People's Republic of China.

Chinese State-Mandated Ethnogenesis

Though James Scott's account in *Seeing Like a State* does not directly address the state's use of ethnographic techniques, they very clearly do contribute to the project of legibility and simplification that is his topic: legibility and simplification designed to strengthen state power. In the polyglot peripheries of the old Chinese empire, many people possessed only local identities, though they shared common languages with other people in their respective regions. This posed a challenge for the census takers and anthropologists who sought to impose an ethnographic order on these regions, and so ethnonyms were invented and applied to peoples with no name and no discrete ethnic identity (Gladney 1996, 301). The modern Chinese state, in order to assimilate its internal Others, needed to identify them and delineate how they varied from the Han majority. In doing so, however, the regime objectified—and often created—ethnic identities that have served as institutional foundations for systemic resistance to assimilatory pressures (ibid., 299). Groups once despised and vilified for their difference, including the Hui, now derive great pride from the common identity that separates themselves from the majority (ibid., 300). As Dru Gladney puts it,

> In each of these cases, the label the state has assigned, no matter how ill-suited, has led to the crystallization and expression of identities within the designated group along pan-ethnic lines. While ethnogenesis and the rise of pan-ethnic identities have occurred throughout history, particularly with the incorporation of native peoples by nation-states, China represents an incubated process: What normally takes several generations for most ethnic groups has for of the identified nationalities in the PRC occurred in the last 30 years. (Ibid., 300.)

Even the former barbarians, although still on the margins of Chinese civilization, have acquired nationalities, and imagined ethnohistories, of their own. Indeed, millions of Chinese once identified with

the Han majority have sought to identify themselves as members of ethnic minorities due to privileges associated with such a designation. Upon the establishment of these official identities, they have rapidly been appropriated and internalized by those they affect (Gladney 1996, 315).

The logic of the state demanded that China define its various peoples, and yet China's minorities have used these definitions to subvert the ideal of a homogeneous China. The authorities sought protection from the contaminating influence of radicalized minorities; however, the recent uprising in Xinjiang, along with continuing unrest in Tibet, suggest that the "health" of the Chinese nation, defined as its territorial integrity and ideological purity, is at risk. Regardless, the PRC's attempt to identify and reify its Others has, in all likelihood, facilitated its rule. The fact that all minority institutions, be they educational, cultural, or political, are necessarily arms of the state under Chinese law derives from the demands of a disciplinary society. Identity formation in the People's Republic has served to reinforce order, the central project of the modern state, as social–scientific technologies have been employed to construct and control potentially dangerous minority populations. Ultimately, however, these attempts to manage ethnic minorities may lead them from the margins of a Chinese national narrative to the centers of their own. The PRC's ethnic minorities, despite their "constructed-ness," may use the new ethnographic order to subvert the Chinese state, much like the Soviet successor states.

The Experience of the Democratic West

Though the experience of the PRC and the Soviet Union seems far removed from that of the metropolitan West, the rise of minority ethnic insurgencies has had a similarly profound effect in many of the affluent industrialized societies.

Canada, long a British dominion, may be the best-known example of a seemingly stable society riven by ethnic difference. Indeed, among theorists of multiculturalism many rue the "tyranny of the Canadian example." Its importance as an example is, however, warranted. Unlike China, political violence does not pose an imminent threat (though during the 1960s, separatist violence led to the declaration of martial law in Quebec). Furthermore, the institutionaliza-

tion of Canadian minorities, though a process intimately linked to state policy, cannot be attributed primarily to Leninist ethnographic techniques. Even so, Canada, with significant aboriginal and francophone minorities as well as a large foreign-born population, is a society with many "identity" fault lines. Moreover, it is clear that the state has sought to institutionalize ethnicity in an attempt to minimize social disruption.

In the case of Quebec, a cultural fault line roughly coincides with a provincial boundary, a situation that has given rise to perhaps the most thoroughgoing form of asymmetrical federalism in the world. After Switzerland, the Canadian confederation is the second-most decentralized federal polity in the West; unlike Switzerland, however, authority is not granted uniformly across cantons. With each issue concerning federal-provincial relations, the government of Quebec demands unique concessions and, if only on a de-facto basis, is granted them more often than not. Today, Quebec's provincial government operates its own immigration policy separate from that of the federal government; a foreign national wishing to reside in Ontario or British Columbia must apply to the federal government; if the same foreign national wishes to reside in Montreal, it is no longer the federal government's concern (Steyn 1999, 22–23). Even Taylor (1994, 58–59) recognizes that this reflects the Quebec government's desire to actively *create* members of a francophone community in order to secure cultural survival.

Beyond this fragmentation of political authority, Canada has, in the years since the patriation of the constitution and the establishment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, experienced a very real fragmentation of citizenship. Unlike the United States Constitution, with its clear ideological emphasis on individuals (excepting references at the margins to the enslaved and aboriginal nations), the Charter, in the words of Alan Cairns (1995, 182), encourages particular identities:

> The Charter is more than an instrument that hands out abstract rights equally to all Canadians and is indifferent to their various statuses defined by gender, ethnicity, official-language status, and the presence or absence of disabilities. In fact, it specifically mobilizes Canadians to think in terms of these categories. It encourages Canadians to think of themselves for constitutional purposes as women, as official-language minorities, as disabled, or as ethnocultural Canadians. Particular Char-

ter clauses and the high profile of the constitution in recent years en-
gendered constitutional discourse around gender, ethnicity, indige-
nousness, and so on, which join the historic constitutional languages of
federalism and parliamentary government.

In rejecting the U.S. model of a uniform territorial federalism and in
embracing, for constitutional purposes, a kind of nonterritorial federal-
ism that politicizes and constitutionalizes diversity, the Canadian state
has created huge opportunities for political rent-seekers:

> Organizations, often publicly funded, have developed to enhance the
> potency of Charter clauses relevant to their clientele. These clauses
> generate constitutional identities, formerly lacking, in those to whom
> they apply. The elites of the social categories concerned may be said to
> occupy constitutional niches, or to possess constitutional clauses. . . .
> The public profile of the social categories accorded such recognition is
> markedly enhanced, as is their sense of distinctiveness (Ibid.)

A traditional representative system, which holds that an individual can
represent the interests of a diverse constituency, is thus undermined.
The homogeneity of marginalization and coercion was not replaced by
a political homogeneity based upon an equalizing universalism; rather, it
was replaced by a political heterogeneity that creates rival centers of
loyalty.

If Canada, like the United States, lacked a large, self-conscious, and
concentrated ethnocultural minority, the fragmentation of citizenship
would occur only at the margins. Canada does, however, have such a
minority. During the constitutional crises of the 1980s and 1990s,
francophone Quebec has sought a substantive shift in the composi-
tion of the Canadian state from a federal model to a binational or
multinational model. As Quebec's constitutional demands have
grown, its "two nations" model has, in a sense, been actualized as the
Rest of Canada (ROC) has been forced to defend its prerogatives.

By the 1980s, the Québècois political insurgency, strengthened by
postwar affluence and assertiveness, had been challenging the consti-
tutional status quo for 20 years in a process that led to the Constitu-
tion Act of 1982. During the Meech Lake constitutional round that
followed, Quebec made a number of gains; however, the other
provinces followed suit, insisting on the principle of equality among
provinces in all cases except recognition as a "distinct society." After
the defeat of the Meech Lake Accord, and Quebec's failure to achieve

recognition as a distinct society, the Charlottetown Accord was drafted in 1992. This accord, however, placed far greater emphasis on aboriginal demands than Québècois demands (Cairns 1995, 282). Ultimately, it failed after a string of ignominious defeats in provincial referenda. The concerns that animated Canadians in opposing the Accord, above all else, involved the redistributional indeterminacy of constitutional change: in light of the unintended consequences of previous constitutional reforms, it is likely that a wariness about dramatic change of any kind killed the "distinct society" proposal.

To this day, the Quebec government is not formally reconciled to the constitutional order established in 1982. Quebec's provincial status poses a nearly insurmountable barrier to the realization of Québècois national aspirations, though many of the trappings of nationhood have been adopted (e.g., the provincial legislature is called the National Assembly). Though Quebec's Liberal premier during the Charlottetown round would have preferred dealing with a coherent ROC in constitutional negotiations, such an actor was absent—the rest of Canada was represented instead by the pan-Canadian federal government, which was in no position to grant concessions of its own. For Cairns (1995, 312), federalism and a multinational definition of Canada are fundamentally incompatible:

> The sociological reality and self-perceptions of the Québècois as a nation can receive only limited constitutional expression as long as, constitutionally, Quebec is a province. The limited maneuverability available in responding to Quebec is a by-product of its provincial status and the contemporary federalism norms attached to that status. . . . The central cue transmitted by the formal amending process to governments and citizens outside Quebec is that any proposed constitutional response to Quebec's aspirations is to be evaluated by federalist criteria. Accordingly, an inflexible response is, in a sense, routinized by the provincial equality principle.

The federal and multinational tendencies are fundamentally antagonistic, in this view. Any kind of special status undermines the logic of a federal polity; at the same time, the reality of Quebec's national aspirations forces the Canadian state to offer concessions in the form of asymmetrical federalism. This, in turn, further irritates the other provinces. A constitutional stalemate is the result. Just as Mancur Olson (1982) argued that the accretion of distributional coalitions or interest groups in a stable society gradually undermines economic efficiency by

causing a kind of sclerosis, Cairns (1995, 17) argues that constitutional interests, each seeking to use the constitution for its own purposes, have undermined the possibility of constitutional reform in the absence of a convulsive shock.

Like Brubaker's Soviet Union, contemporary Canada has sought to pacify national minorities by offering them political institutions and political authority. Over time, however, political and bureaucratic constituencies have emerged that are no longer satisfied by the status quo. With the control of institutions conceded in the name of social peace, Quebec's "sovereigntists" have established a powerful foundation from which to assault the existing constitutional order. At the same time, that very order prevents Québècois national aspirations from ever being realized, thus offering only one alternative: a convulsive shock. In Quebec's case, this means independence. By allowing the sovereigntists to frame the debate, those who oppose the dissolution of the Canadian state have already been defeated. Even Quebec's opposition, the provincial Liberals, strongly support recognition of Quebec as a "distinct society." The startling demographic decline of Quebec's anglophone and allophone minorities, driven in large part by the migration of those who fear francophone hegemony to Ontario and westward, reinforces this tendency. Meanwhile the concessions made in the name of asymmetrical federalism, including symbolic gestures like the abandonment of the Red Ensign in the 1960s, have undermined the historical legitimacy of the federal government.

The Labour government in Great Britain, in an attempt to satiate the Celtic communities that are a key element of its electoral coalition, is traveling down the same path. With an overwhelming parliamentary majority, Tony Blair has entered upon a dramatic program of constitutional revision. From the House of Lords to electoral reform, Blair has already made an extraordinary constitutional mark. His most important legacy, however, has surely been the devolution of power to new parliamentary bodies in Northern Ireland (replacing the Stormont parliament), Wales, and, most importantly, Scotland. England has not been granted a regional government, though regional development agencies and a regional government for London (replacing the Greater London Council abolished by Margaret Thatcher, now with an elected mayoralty) have been or are about to be established.

In a few bold strokes, Blair has irrevocably transformed the British political landscape. As the Canadian case demonstrates, once authority has been granted, it creates constituencies that jealously guard their

inheritance. Britain has become, in a brief period, a quasifederal polity. Blair's federalism is, however, asymmetrical. While England has no government to represent its interests, Scotland has been given a parliament that will control domestic arrangements, safeguard the Scottish legal system, and have limited fiscal powers. The Welsh Assembly is a legislature in name alone, having been given few substantive powers. In Northern Ireland, the parliament will be able to maintain privileged and direct relations with the Republic of Ireland. For the same political reasons that led Blair to create the Scottish parliament, he has not challenged the overrepresentation of Scotland in the British Parliament, despite the fact that Scottish representation has been maintained since the nineteenth century in the teeth of demographic decline—to protect Scottish domestic priorities that are now further protected by the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh (Keating 1998, 198–99).

In "What's Wrong with Asymmetrical Government?" Michael Keating (1998) defends asymmetrical arrangements in Britain by arguing, simply enough, that such arrangements have existed for a long time because they accommodate asymmetries in identity and self-representation. Remarkably enough, he uses the example of Quebec to defend this society-centric view of asymmetry (Keating 1998, 196). But as our examples have amply demonstrated, asymmetries in identity and self-representation are very much a "dialogical process," one that is intimately tied to privileges and institutions secured by the state; they are not autochthonous by any stretch of the imagination. Though cultural collectivities certainly can precede their political articulation, politicized and institutionalized cultural collectivities do not.

The Dangers Posed by the Confounding State

Ultimately, the most powerful argument against the politicization and institutionalization of cultural collectivities is that it exacerbates human misery. In the People's Republic of China, the rise of state ethnicity has, to a certain extent, afforded a degree of protection for citizens. In democratic polities, however, it has often led to demagoguery, xenophobia, and other kinds of extremism. The ignorance of voters in all mass democracies, demonstrated time and again, leads many to make decisions in the absence of any information about the consequences of

public policy choices and on the basis of arbitrary preferences (Friedman 1998). To speak of a collective democratic will is, in light of the empirical evidence of widespread public ignorance and, more importantly, its *systemic* causes, delusional, irresponsible, and dangerous. Divorced from the long-term and often invisible consequences of their actions, voters often support political programs that go against their interests.

These concerns have been raised in the past, having formed the basis of Plato's rejection of democracy (Somin 1998, 444.) Today, however, they are all the more relevant as the intimate sphere and cultural membership are increasingly the subject of often-destructive state power. Ironically enough, the institutionalization of ethnicity, even when it appears to undermine state cohesion, serves the state by masking serious political and class differences, differences in need, as cultural differences; in doing so, it allows the state to isolate and stigmatize stable enemies constructed out of whole cloth, often minorities, thus creating solidarity among members of the reimagined majority and inculcating allegiance.

Posing as a reform designed to enshrine cultural difference or innocuous efforts to facilitate the collection of statistics, the institutionalization of ethnicity has severely undermined the independence of the public sphere. By removing questions of culture from political deliberation, individual and collective efforts to secure cultural survival would still be possible; however, states would not be able to legislate outcomes or limit the choices of others through legal sanction. A disinterested state would presumably welcome the *de*politicization of cultural collectivities, but the confounding state is far from disinterested.

*   *   *

Mass democracy cannot prevent the state from pursuing its own ends because the informational burdens created by the state's social-scientific technologies prevents the mass public from engaging in effective surveillance—the modern state confounds attempts to control it. Contrary to the view of democratic identity theorists such as Taylor and Habermas, social groups, including those organized around ethnic affiliation that are believed to exist prior to and independent of state power, are as often as not an institutionalized effect of state power, used to facilitate various state functions, including the minimization of social discord and the extraction of resources. In moving from the principal strategy of

premodern states—inspiring fear in the hearts of potential chal-
lengers—to securing allegiance from the governed by means of inter-
ventions that restructure the lifeworld, modern states paralyze societal
elements that might otherwise aim to avoid domination by the state.
When these interventions persuade people that their "identities" are at
stake in ethnic politics, we see not a welcome expression of democratic
self-rule, but a modern incarnation of the dangers of democracy—espe-
cially of democracy in which the people unwittingly play out the
unanticipated consequences of policies enacted by largely autonomous
states.

NOTE

1. The following account draws heavily on Brubaker 1996, 23–54.

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