

***Paper Topic: Nation-states and transnational corporations.***

“Nation-states are no longer viable or necessary and will disintegrate into smaller, more culturally homogeneous units.” (Robbins p. 117) The three developments that hurt the life of nation-states are: trans-nationalism, an increase in the number of people living and working in countries other than the one in which they hold citizenship; the growing power and influence of transnational corporations; and the growth in the number, and possibly influence, of non-governmental organizations. Without the nation-state there is no essential element of the culture of capitalism, or no guarantee that people could own their own property or provide a means of production for themselves. The rising of the new age causes the nation-state to soon be replaced by new institutions, the most being the transnational corporation.

A nation-state is an expression used by people to explain an area brought together by a common culture or tradition, common language, or a common race. Being a product of nineteenth century Europe, the nation-state is a more recent product of the older idea of the state.

The state was established as a means of providing transportation, communication, judicial systems, and education. As required by the capitalist production, the state was required to maintain all establishments provided, and also keep order with the people its providing for. Yet, anthropologists have been long concerned with of idea of the origin of the state.

“Due to population increases, the people needed to have a more formal means of government and control and will lead to greater social stratification and inequality. Also with the population increased and food production becoming more complex, a class of specialists emerged and created a stratified society. As the irrigation systems became more complex, groups of specialists emerged to plan and direct activities, and this group developed into an administrative elite that ruled over despotic, centralized states.” (Robbins pg. 104)

Another idea that could have led to the emergence of new states was war. A group would come together and develop into a central group of authority, in which this group could go and take over smaller groups that also developed into central groups of authority. In return, the smaller groups would attempt to defend themselves, in this overtaking and expanding. In the end, the group that would conquer over the other would form into a united village and a state.

“The modern state has three tasks: to secure obedience and gain a monopoly on force with legitimate violence; to exert control over economic life to ensure the orderly circulation of goods and to take for itself a share of the national income to pay for its own expenditure, luxury, administration, or wars; and to participate in spiritual or religious life and derive additional strength by using religious values or establishing a state religion.” (Robbins pg. 106) But, with the beginning of the nineteenth century, the modern state was facing new problems and challenges. Two, specifically, were the main

focus of problems for the state. Due to the fall of the divine rights of kings, and state having absolute power, the political leaders faced a crisis of “political legitimacy.” Also, with the degree of economic integration being “weak and nonexistent,” the state residents were having trouble identify themselves as residents of that state. People spoke different languages, different types of money, and used different means of measurement

To solve this problem of economics and political issues, the state had to decide to turn into a nation. Nations had to be created by the people around the world, by deciding on a common language, common currency, common culture, and a common taste.

After about two or three hundred passed, the nation-state is suggested, as stated in the opening paragraph, “no longer viable or necessary and will disintegrate into smaller, more culturally homogenous units.” These units are broken down into three major areas of threat to the nation-state. Trans-nationalism, which is “an increase in the number of people living and working in countries other than the one in which they hold citizenship,” is the first unit that is that breaking down the nation-state.

Trans-nationalism, people living and finding jobs in countries other than the one in which they hold citizenship, is a growing threat to the nation-state. People work outside of their own countries, but they still keep close ties within them. In one case, being a father, it could be cheaper to come to the U.S. and work, than send the money back to your family in Bosnia. Food, education, and lifestyle could be cheaper for a family in Bosnia, rather than a family in the United States. The difficulty of finding jobs, and low pay wages, drive people outside of their own countries, and lead them into the U.S., or other high paying countries. “Trans-nationalism requires a reconceptualization of the nation-state; whereas it was once thought of as people sharing a common territory, it now must include citizens who are physically dispersed among other states but who remain socially, politically, culturally, and sometimes economically part of the nation-state of their ancestors.” (Robbins)

Yet, another unit of the nation-state, is the transnational corporation. The ever-growing need to integrate national economics is grass-rooted from the nation-state. Transnational corporations can be described as, “the growth of business and the creation of the consumer required standardized weights, measures, and currencies, common wages, and prices, and a homogenous consumer population such that a product produced in a given country would be desired by everyone in that country,” (Robbins)

“The corporation has evolved from an institution with limited power to one that some claim is the dominant governance institution of the world and which exceeds most governments in size and power.” (Robbins pg. 122)

Corporations have evolved such power by convincing governments of an ideology called “corporate libertarianism,” which gives all the rights and freedoms of the corporations above the rights and freedoms of the employers. Corporate powers keep getting larger and larger. “Of the world’s 100 largest economic entities, 51 corporations and only 49 countries, measured by annual corporate sales and annual domestic products.

Our calculations indicate that the Top 200's share of global economic activity has grown rapidly over the past decade. In 1982, the Top 200 firms had sales that were the equivalent of 24.2 percent of the world's gross domestic product. Today, the figure has grown to 28.3 percent of the world's gross domestic product." (Lobe pg. 1)

Transnational corporations control more than a quarter of the world's economic activity, but nobody controls them, except for their shareholders. "Unchecked and unregulated, the labor market in the global economy is becoming nothing more than a vast shopping mall for the transnational corporations."