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National Self-Determination from a Historical Perspective

The extremely difficult task of analyzing the history of national self-determination in Europe can be fulfilled only in a very generalized way, and with reference to specific events and developments. One of the common errors of non-historical explanations is that the call for self-determination is usually related to the ideology of "nationalism," rather than to the social group "nation." The latter is not an eternal phenomenon, but one which emerged and developed from the Middle Ages. This nation-forming process is thus not an "error of history," as some critics have argued, but is a natural part of modern European history, similar to the development of industrialization, constitutionalism or a market-economy. The central topic which has to be analyzed as a decisive element of this nation-forming process, is the emergence, intensity and social relevance of national identity—not of "nationalism."

Let us start our observations of European nation-forming process at the threshold of the modern society, the time between the Great French Revolution and the Congress of Vienna. There were only eight state-nations in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century: English, French, Spanish (Castilian), Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, Swedish and (with some doubts) Russian (see Table 1). Each state-nation was a product of a long process of development, and had the following characteristics: independent statehood; rule by ethnically homegeneous ruling classes; and a developed literary language and national culture. During the same period, there were two emerging nations which lacked their own state: the Germans and Italians. We also find more than twenty "non-dominant ethnic groups"[1] spread across the entire European continent.

The non-dominant ethnic groups usually lacked three traits:[2] their "own" ruling class—their social structure did not correspond to the given stage of

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1 The term "non-dominant ethnic group" was proposed by the Austrian historian G. Stourzh, in his *Die Gleichberechtigung der Nationalitäten in der Verfassung und Verwaltung Österreichs 1848–1918* (Vienna 1985) 6. The term is now accepted by many historians as well as the European Scientific Foundation. The results of the European Scientific Foundation project, "Comparative studies on governments and non-dominant ethnic groups in Europe," were published in six volumes by New York University Press, 1991–1993.

2 For a more detailed explanation of my concept of the nation-forming process, see: M. Hroch, "From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation," *New Left Review* 198 (1993): 3 ff.

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Table 1—The Starting Point of the Nation Forming Process in Europe (1800/1815)

		WESTERN EUROPE NORTHERN EUROPE	CENTRAL, EASTERN,
State-nations	Monoethnic state	France, Netherlands, Portugal	
	Multiethnic Empires	English in Great Britain Castilians in Spain	Danes, Swedes, Russians, Germans in Habsburg Lands
National Culture without State		Italians	Germans
Non-dominant ethnic groups	Suppressed continuity of old statehood	Scots	Poles, Magyars, Norwegians, Czechs, Croatians
	Interrupted tradition of old statehood	Irish, Welsh, Bretons, Catalans, Basques, Flemish	Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Romanians
	Without any tradition of statehood	Frisians, Corsicans Galicians (in Spain)	Slovaks, Slovenes, Finns, Estonians, Belarusians, Sorbs

social development of their region; continuous tradition in "their own" literary language; and their "own" national state. With reference to these deficits, some educated members of the non-dominant ethnic group started to focus on their own ethnicity and to conceive of their group as a potential nation-to-be. They compared their situation with that of fully-fledged nations and formulated their goals with reference to the three deficits, noted above. To achieve all the attributes of a fully-fledged nation, they organized national movements.

We can distinguish three phases in almost all national movements: Phase A is marked by learned observations and descriptions of what is (or is supposed to be) the nation, its language, its past, its mentality, way of life etc. Phase B is characterized by the increase in the number of patriots, who seek to win over as many of their ethnic group as possible to the project of creating the nation-to-be. The success of this national agitation is a determining, but not a self-evident, condition for further progress in the nation-forming process. Once the decisive part of all strata of the non-dominant ethnic group share their national identity as a specific value, a mass movement emerges, Phase C. While national movements were not limited to the Eastern part of Europe, one typological difference can be observed: "Western" national movements were characterized by having started their Phase B under conditions of a constitutional regime, as well

as under conditions of a civil society, while the comparable

Table 2 — European National Movements from Non-Dominant Ethnic Group to Fully-Fledged Nation

	1800	1850	1900	1920	1990
Poles	FS AB P		BC	IND	
Norwegians	FS AB P AUT		BC IND		
Irish	AB P FS		BC	IND	
Greeks	FS AB P IND				
Serbs	AB BC P AUT IND FS				
Magyars	FS AB P BC		AUT	IND	
Czechs	AB	P BC	FS	IND	
Slovaks	AB		(BC)	P BC AUT IND	
Finns	AB		BC FS P	IND	
Croatians	AB P		BC FS	AUT IND	
Slovenes	AB	P	BC FS	AUT IND	
Ukraine (East)		(AB)	AB P	AUT	IND
Ukraine (West)	AB	P	BC		IND
Estonians	AB		BC P	(IND) FS	IND
Latvians	AB		BC P	(IND) FS	IND
Lithuanians		AB	BC P	(IND) FS	IND
Belarusians			AB	AUT	IND
Bulgarians		AB P BC-IND FS			
Macedonians			AB	P AUT	IND
Flemish	AB	FS	P	BC AUT	
Welsh	AB			P	
Scots		AB P			
Catalans			AB FS P	(BC) AUT	
Basques			AB P	(BC) UT	
Galicians			AB		P
Bretons	AB				(P)
Sorbs	AB				

AB – national agitation starts
P – political programme formulated
AUT – autonomy status achieved
BC – mass movement starts from successful agitation
FS – completed social structure of the nation
IND – independence achieved

Phase B of "Eastern" ones proceeded within the context of late absolutist, feudal regimes in the Habsburg Empire, Ottoman Empire, Tsarist Russia, Prussia and Denmark. In the following analysis, the term "Eastern" implies, not only geographical, but above all typological characteristics.

The apparently asynchronous course of different national movements can be observed in Table 2. The decisive Phase B stage started in some cases (Czechs, Norwegians, Greeks, Magyars) around 1800; in other cases fifty and even a hundred years later (Belarusians, Catalans, Basques, Ukrainians in Russia). In

some cases, the Phase B stage achieved its objective of transformation into a mass movement rather quickly; in others, it lasted many decades.

The goals of national movements were formulated during Phase B and at the threshold of Phase C. Despite variations in singular national movements, these goals can be generally summarized into three groups of demands, corresponding to the three main deficits of national existence, mentioned above: (1) the development or improvement of national culture based on local language, and the demand for its usage in education, administration and economic life; (2) social demands for a full social structure, i.e., for their "own" elites and entrepreneurial classes, abolition of social privileges, and support of a just division of goods between different nations living in the territory of one multinational state; and (3) political demands, including equal civil rights and some degree of self-administration. The relative priority and timing of each of these sets of demands varied, and we can use differences in priority and timing as suitable criteria for a typological differentiation of national movements.

This essay, however, focuses on only one group of national demands: the political ones. It was at this level that the demand for self-determination emerged. One needs to stress again that, in most European national movements, the demand for self-determination, i.e., for full independence, emerged at a very late stage of national movements.

How strong were the political demands represented in the different national programs? With reference to Phase B, we can distinguish two categories of national movements. The first category is marked by national movements, where the political demands dominate Phase B, and are supplemented by sometimes weaker, or later formulated linguistic and social demands. This was the case of Polish, Norwegian, Serbian, and Greek national movements in the "East," and the case of Irish and Scottish in the "West." The second category involves national movements, where linguistic and cultural demands dominate Phase B and are usually followed by political demands prior to the transition to the mass movement stage of Phase C. This was the case in the majority of national movements not only in the East, but also in West Europe. Nevertheless, the timing of the emergence of political programs was very different (see Table 2).

The structure of national programs and their results were not exclusively decided by the individual wishes and demands of the leading patriots. The following objective and specific circumstances have to be taken in account: (1) the political system, under which the national movement proceeded during its Phase B and Phase C; (2) the social structure of the non-dominant ethnic group and (3) previous developments in the history of this specific group.

How important was the political regime in the given state? Concerning Phase B, it is not enough to say that it was a late absolutist regime. We have to

distinguish between the "legalist" system of the Habsburg Empire, where the ruling elites camouflaged their dominance by historical claims and contracts concluded between Habsburgs and the representatives of the non-dominant ethnic group, and Ottoman rule based on conquest and force. The latter pattern, even if not as brutal, was also the practice of Russian rule. While the political opposition in Phase C could find and use "lawful" arguments against the Austrian ruling elite, in the second case, every political opposition was *a priori* illegal. Entering the field of politics, national movements had to take into account that they would be confronted with persecution.

The social structure of non-dominant ethnic groups at the beginning of the modern era also has to be considered. Some of them (Magyars, Poles, Norwegians, Greeks) were societies with an almost completed social structure, corresponding to the given stage of economic development of their given territory. The remaining majority of cases lacked some important classes and groups, especially the higher social and economic ones. In some extreme cases, the non-dominant ethnic group consisted only of rural, peasant population (Lithuanians, Estonians, Slovenes, Belarusians).

Even though political demands emerged during the decisive modern stage of the nation-forming process, we also have to take into account previous developments. From this point of view, the results of the developments were rather different, both from juridical and political aspects. Three main situations can be distinguished (see Table 1): First, the non-dominant ethnic group lived under conditions of its former independent medieval state. Members of this group could look to the past, where they had their "own" ruling class and national culture. This statehood was nevertheless weakened and suppressed during the early Modern period through conquest, or forced contracts. Certain institutions, nevertheless, remained, and certain memories survived: a strong one in the case of Poles and Magyars, and a weaker one in that of Norwegians, Czechs and Croatians. An exception is the case of Finland, which attained autonomous status after the Russian conquest of 1809. Second, there existed a medieval state, but it was destroyed and survived not in institutions or "rights," but only in memory. This was the case of Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Lithuanians and Ukrainians, and has its parallels in Western Europe (Catalans, Basques, Flemish, Welsh). Third, the non-dominant ethnic group never achieved the level of statehood and the tradition of a written language was very weak. This was the case of Estonians, Latvians, Slovenes, Slovaks, Belarusians and (with the above mentioned reservation) also of the Finns.

Naturally, we must first ask how relevant these differences were to the nation-formation process and if we can combine all three objective conditions (political system, social structure and history) to explain the differences in the

strength of the political program. What we usually call the political program of national movements was as a rule not a stable or homogeneous set of demands, and it certainly cannot be reduced to a plea for self-determination. These demands differed in their relevance, intensity and structure. Based on empirical observation, we can distinguish three levels or stages of the national political program. While not mutually exlusive in reality, we shall analyze each stage separately under the following simplified headings: a) Substitution, b) Participation, and c) Self-Determination.

A) SUBSTITUTION. The formation of the image of the "fatherland," as a psychogeographical fact, belongs to the first steps of national agitation. This includes attempts to define the ethnic territory, and this may transcend political borders, where members of non-dominant ethnic groups live on the territory of two or more political or administrative units.

Linguistic and cultural demands temporarily substituted some functions of political aims, especially where the oppressive regime did not allow political activities. This was the case in Austria until the 1850s, and in Russia until 1905. A further form of substitution was evident in the emerging historical consciousness of rediscovering and remembering the glorious past. Patriotic agitators stimulated yearnings (sometimes nostalgic, sometimes militant) for some kind of restoration of old political institutions.

B) PARTICIPATION. Under the conditions of the old regime, national participation was often discussed, and the first claim was almost everywhere directed towards participation in local (municipal) administration. These demands corresponded not only to political possibilities and opportunities, but also to given social structures. Where the members of non-dominant ethnic groups lived in towns (as in Bohemia or in Hungary), or had an opportunity to immigrate into the towns (as in the Baltics, Finland, or the Western part of Ukraine), the idea of participation in municipal self-government grew stronger. Usually the struggle for positions in the town-hall came to be the first political experience of national movements. Connected to this was the struggle for positions in the municipal or local administration.

The demand for participation was naturally conditioned by the existence, or non-existence, of representative assemblies within the given territory, and by the degree of civil rights that were given to the population by the ruling nation. Only in Hungary could the demand for political participation be used under the old regime in some continuity with the political demands of old Estates. Everywhere else the struggle for participation emerged with the introduction of a constitutional regime: in Austria after 1860, and in Russia in 1905. In the

Austrian case, the struggle was directed to two levels of representation—Reichsrat and Landtag; in Russia, only the central assembly was offered.

Where the national movement could count on the majority of the population in a given territorial (administrative) unit, the first goal of the struggle was to achieve a majority of national representatives in the Diet. This was, nevertheless, complicated by the fact that the elites of the ruling nation were over-represented in legislative bodies. The national movements which were concerned about this inequality (Czechs, Slovenes, Ukrainians) answered by demanding a reform of electoral laws. Demands for democracy thus entered into the political program.

The probability of getting some influence through participation in the central parliament (Reichstag, Duma, Reichsrat, etc.) was near zero. The influence of small nations in Russia was minimalized in advance by their inferiority in numbers. In Hungary, the participation of non-Magyars was limited by unproportional allocation of seats. Only in Cisleithania-Austria was there some possibility for the Poles and Czechs (because of their number) to gain some representation.

National leaders also tried other ways to put the interests of their nation forward. Demands for representation in central offices, ministries, etc. were part of the national program, even if sometimes they were not verbalized publicly. Successful advancement into the ranks of state elites offered not only more prestige to national movements, but also an opportunity to present demands more effectively.

Analogically, the struggle for participation was not an end in itself. Participation enabled one to push forward national demands concerning language, culture and social goals. The following linguistic demands became part of the political struggle: high schools with the local language of instruction, and full linguistic equality in administration, in courts of justice, as well as in economic life. Success depended on the ability of national representatives to influence competent institutions within which they participated. The same applied to social demands, such as improving the social status of new middle classes, developing a just distribution of taxation, participating in the decisions on public expenses, subventions, technical innovations etc. Naturally, even the central focus of some national movements, i.e., the achievement of full social structure, became a matter of politics.

The struggle for political participation thus included four groups of demands: municipal self-government; entry into all levels of state and regional administration; participation in legislative power, including courts of justice; and participation in executive power.

C) SELF-DETERMINATION. Participation, even if successfully gained, represented, however, only one part of the political program. Having no possibility of influencing the central decisions through participation, national leaders tried to minimalize the power of the center and to gain more space for independent decisions. The only way seemed to be to press for greater national autonomy upon "their" own territory.

In theory, the demand for autonomy appeared to parallel the struggle for participation in legislative and executive power, or even preceded it. In practice, however, it was usually achieved later, after participation had been established. The idea of autonomy was accepted as the basis for the program of "austroslavism" in 1848 under which the whole empire had to be reconstructed and divided into autonomous territories delimited by ethnicity. This program failed, as well as all later attempts based on traditional historical territories.

Since the strongest tradition of territorial autonomy was in Hungary and was related to the former medieval state, it is no wonder that the Magyar national movement, after having been temporarily defeated in the revolution of 1848–1849, achieved full political autonomy through the installation of Austro-Hungarian dualism in 1867. Partially successful were also the Polish calls for autonomy in Austrian Galicia. On the other hand, Czech and Croatian demands for more political autonomy, based also upon the memory of a medieval state, remained limited to the traditional institution of the Landtag. This example illustrates the remarkable coincidence between the program of political autonomy and the results of the first stage of the nation-forming process during the Middle Ages. All "autonomist" national movements in the Habsburg Empire occurred upon the territory of "their" medieval state, and the claimed territory was defined by historical borders. The Serbian struggle for autonomy and consequently for independence, the Lithuanian program of autonomy from 1905, as well as the Finnish, Ukrainian ones, etc. were also based upon the image of an historical national territory. Their territorial claims, however, were not as exact as in the case of the Habsburg Empire.

Until World War I, the demand for autonomy (not for independence!) remained the central point of the self-determination component in the program of national movements in Austria-Hungary and in Russia. Except Magyars, whose national movement successfully resulted in the achievement of a semi-state status, no relevant political group demanded full independence. Even in the Polish case (after the defeat of the revolution of 1848 and 1863–64), autonomy seems to have been the main goal. In Russia, only the Finnish national movement achieved some kind of autonomy by substituting the original regional autonomy with a national one. Among other national movements, only in the

Lithuanian case, could we find a rather isolated voice demanding independence during the revolutionary year of 1905.

These dates demonstrate that all theories of "nationalism," which define national goals as a struggle for independence, do not correspond to empirical facts. Nevertheless, there have been some cases, where the course of national movements seems to correspond to the concept of state-related nationalism—where the political program became a central goal of the movement during Phase B. It concerns national movements in the Balkans and in Norway. The results varied in that only Greeks achieved full independence immediately, while the other movements—the Norwegian, Bulgarian, Serbian and Rumanian—had to accept autonomy for some decades. These five cases do not offer a sufficient basis for generalization concerning the specificity of the nation-forming process in the Balkans. This specificity will be analysed below.

Sometimes, national movements are reproached for stressing national goals rather than civil rights. It is difficult to accept such criticisms since they are based on moralistic judgments rather than on facts. All "Eastern" national movements are, as explained above, typologically defined by the fact that their Phase B proceeded under conditions of the old regime, i.e., they were in progress synchronically with the emerging civic opposition against that regime. Naturally, under such conditions, both the linguistic and social program of national movements included demands for equality of all inhabitants, but usually did not explicitly include civil rights. Opposing old state-elites, leaders of national movements opposed also the old absolutist system, even if they did not (sometimes for opportunistic reasons) verbalize it. Also, in this respect, the linguistic and social program temporarily played a substitutional role for the political program, i.e., as an opposition against the old regime.

This changed as a result of the emerging political program during the bourgeois revolutions in Central Europe in 1848 and in Russia in 1905. During these periods, national leaders formulated political demands for participation and autonomy as well as for constitutional and civil rights. Their position was, however, complicated by the fact that the liberal party of the ruling state-nation in Austria and the democrats and socialists in Russia also fought for the same goal. The latter's constitutional program did not include equality for non-dominant ethnic groups, and consequently their struggle partially clashed with that of national movements. These conflicts proceeded as a clash between two competing ways towards modernization, and it is misleading and unfair to accuse all participants of national movements of being "counter-revolutionaries." The conservative faction was, in fact, strong only in the Slovenian and Croatian national movements, but there were also specific liberal factions within these movements.

The Balkans also present some exceptions in this respect. The demands for autonomy and for independence were usually so strong that they over-shadowed any strategies about the political system which might be gained. The Greeks very quickly incorporated demands for constitutionalism as an important objective, while in the Serbian, Rumanian and later also Macedonian and Albanian movements, the constitutional issue was not discussed prior to the achievement of political success. There might be some parallel in the fact that the ruling elites in the Ottoman Empire did not develop any relevant liberal program during the nineteenth century.

In cases where the transition to Phase C succeeded, the differentiation of political programs was usually between national radicals, who inclined more to democratism, and national conservatives, who maintained a conservative-liberal position. Even if the power relationship between these two camps was at the beginning (especially if it occurred during Phase B) usually in favour of conservatives, it shifted almost everywhere in favour of democracy. This trend was strong particularly in those national movements, where the only way of winning participation for the non-dominant ethnic group was to give political rights to lower social classes, i.e., to support the concept of democracy. Generally, the movement towards a democratic program was easier in the case of non-dominant groups with an uncompleted social structure; national movements under the control of quickly emerging national ruling classes (Magyars, Poles, Greeks) were inclined towards a program which marginalized democracy.

Finally, it is necessary to stress that the majority of national movements in Central and Eastern Europe achieved an independent status, even though this goal was not included in their initial and less ambitious national program. The key turning point came from external factors resulting from World War I and the October revolution. Even at the beginning of the War, only a few politicians sought independence of their nation. The breakdown of the Tsarist system in Russia, and later the breakdown of Germany and Austria-Hungary, opened the door to statehood even in such areas as the Baltic, where independence became by coincidence of events the only alternative to communism.

Nevertheless, once achieved, independence was generally accepted and celebrated as a positive development and as a milestone in national history. It is surprising how quickly the idea of national independence was accepted by the masses as a self-evident fact. The idea of the right to self-determination also became self-evident within a substantial segment of the population in those national movements, such as the Slovak, Croatian or Ukrainian, which did not achieve full independence in 1918–1919.

From this perspective, we have to observe the fact that the population of all newly independent states accepted the loss of their independence during the period

of 1939–1948 as a collective humiliation and tragedy, without regard to the character of political oppression. Subsequently, new national movements emerged even prior to perestroika. Indeed the demand for an independent state became a major tenet of national movements in the post-1945 period. This consensus across all borders is one of the main differences between the new and "classical" national movements.

Even though the pre-history and the course of national movements differed their outcome was in almost all cases surprisingly identical. Sooner (1918) or later (1989–1990), political independence (as full statehood or as a part of a federation), was achieved based on the call for self-determination. Trying to explain these transformations from the perspective of a non-dominant ethnic group, we could quote classics like H. Kohn: "Every people—awakened to nationalism—sees political self-determination as its goal." Presupposing that this "awakening to nationalism" corresponds to the later part of what I call Phase C, one still needs to explain: why people do successfully "awaken" to nationalism; why there is a coincidence between Phase C and the call for self-determination; and why national movements differed so extremely in their timing and in the structure of their programs?

My concluding remarks will cover three groups of objective circumstances, which have already been noted in the introduction: (1) the political, economic and social situation in multinational Empires and its changes; (2) the social settings of national movements; and (3) the historical development previous to the national movement, including "memory," traditions, and institutions.

(1) To what degree did the emergence of political demands in national movements depend on the general political and social conditions in the given Empire? Naturally, it was easier to formulate political demands under a constitutional regime, such as that of the Habsburg monarchy after 1860, than under an oppressive regime, such as that of Russian or Ottoman Empires, but there existed no complete correspondence. Even under oppressive conditions in Russia, and preconstitutional Prussia, the Polish national movement declared its political goals including independence, and analogically so did the Magyar one before 1860. On the other hand, Slovenes and Ukrainians in Galicia needed a long time to formulate a political program even under a constitutional Austrian regime. The extremely oppressive Ottoman Empire could not stop Serbs, Greeks and later also Bulgarians from political activities.

To what extent did political oppression provoke national movements? The fact is that political oppression of non-dominant ethnic groups also existed in earlier times, but it did not become nationally relevant until the oppressed population (or its educated part) was able to "translate" this oppression into

national and political terms. This "ability" did not depend upon the political regime, but has to be explained by different circumstances.

Before we shall characterize these circumstances, we have to consider the role of unequal economic development in multi-ethnic Empires. The difference between an internal core and a periphery, which could be found in each Empire, significantly influenced the structure of social demands and needs to be taken into account as a factor of political mobilization. Unfortunately, current comparative research does not offer sufficient empirical data to show how the political programs of national movements at the internal core of the territory of the Empire differed from those on the periphery.

(2) Observing the social structure of non-dominant ethnic groups during Phases A and B of national movements, we can distinguish two different types. The first is based upon an almost completed social structure: we find among their participants members of the ruling classes. The latter includes landlords and nobility in the Polish and Magyar national movements, entrepreneurs and high level bureaucrats in the Greek and Norwegian cases, and leaders of local administration and merchants in the Serbian national movement. The second type is characterized by the absence of a completed social structure, such as the predominance of a rural population (Estonians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, Slovenes), or of urban lower and lower-middle classes (Czechs, Slovaks, Latvians, Finns).

If we compare the above two types of social structure to the two categories of national movements, which were outlined in the introduction, we observe a convincing coincidence. National movements with the full social structure—with their "own" national ruling classes—prioritized political demands just in their Phase B, while national movements without a completed social structure preferred linguistic, cultural and social demands during their Phase B and elaborated their political program later, during their Phase C. This analogy allows us to conclude that the social structure of non-dominant ethnic groups influenced decisively the structure of national programs.

This conclusion seems to be confirmed by another set of empirical data, concerning the development of Phase C. National movements belonging to the second category did not develop a secessionist political program, until the social structure of their nation was completed, i.e., the emergence of a bourgeoisie and a high bureaucracy.[3]

3) What about the role of traditions? Nation-formation was an historical process, and national identity was always accompanied by some elements of

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3 The question as to why national movements with uncompleted social structures (which is destinctively the more frequent case) prefer the linguistic program needs to be addressed, but the limited size of this paper does not allow for this examination.

historical "memory." The development of political demands, their timing and internal structure, partially depended on the post-medieval history of the non-dominant ethnic group. It was an advantage for the national movement to present its demands for participation or for autonomy as a continuation or reconstruction of an old, but partially oppressed statehood. This was the case of the Poles, Magyars, Czechs, Norwegians and Croatians. Sooner or later these movements argued for their "historical right" which had been violated by the ruling state-nation.

Even where the medieval state was totally destroyed and the reality, or function, of statehood was interrupted for some centuries, national movements were able to regenerate the historical consciousness (naturally including strong mythological elements) and to formulate their political goals with reference to the original state. This was evident in national movements with a completed social structure (Greeks, Serbs) as well as in those with an uncompleted one (Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Bulgarians). These historically justified borders were, however, never fully identical with homogeneous ethnic ones. This was the main reason for the continuity of national and nationalist conflicts, even though the historically justified secessionist demands of national movements were fulfilled.

The situation of "nations without history" was in this respect a different one. Their national movements could not use arguments based on their own political tradition and this probably contributed to the belated formulation of political programs, especially at the secessionist level. This was the case for the Slovenes, Slovaks, Estonians, Latvians and Belarusians until World War I.

Concluding these observations, we can put forward two general theses: One, the strength and timing of the call for self-determination did not depend upon the intensity of political oppression and had no correlation with the level of linguistic and cultural demands. Two, self-determination became stronger and more successful in national movements which were based on a completed social structure of their non-dominant ethnic group and which could use some institutions or traditions of their statehood from the past. If these two conditions coincided, the call for self-determination and statehood was developed and accepted even during Phase B. This was the case with Poles, Magyars and Norwegians.

One other important factor that we need to consider is the nationally relevant conflict of interest resulting from claims for political power. In their history, most national movements included two anthropological constants: the need for identification with a group and the need for power. This junction was not limited

to national movements, in that it can also be observed in the formation-process of nation-states. In the case of national movements it had some specificities.

As far as a national movement focused its program upon linguistic, cultural and social demands, the power aspirations of its leaders were limited to influence and authority: they expected more prestige than power.[4] Another specificity has to do with the fact that national movements occurred under conditions of some kind of "cultural autocephalism." In deciding the norms of literary language and the ways of its intellectualization, national leaders enjoyed an unlimited authority within their group. At the same time national leaders, who identified with the ethnically defined nation-to-be, resigned themselves to the struggle for political power at the state level, where it was monopolized by members of the ruling nation. Their demands for introducing their language into schools and administration remained up to a certain point without political relevance because the relation between the state elites and the leaders of national movement was not a competitive, but a hierarchical one.

This hierarchical relationship changed, nevertheless, at a certain point. It occurred once the national leaders formulated their program of political participation, which usually also included linguistic, cultural and social demands.[5] The timing of this change was conditioned by the introduction of a constitutional regime and by the completion of the social structure of the non-dominant ethnic group.

There is a correlation between the completed social structure of the non-dominant ethnic group and the political program even if we put in the coordinates of power competition. Even under the old regime, members of higher social classes (landlords, high civil servants, rich entrepreneurs) gained some experience in the struggle for power. They were thus able to "translate" group interests into the language of political power, and some of them (as in Poland and in Hungary) still kept the old tradition of the Estates as political "nation." So long as they participated in Phase B, they brought these experiences with them and formulated their interests in political as well as national terms.

In the struggle for power, national leaders identified their interests with those of the national group, and projected a "service conception" of power colored in national terms.[6] The understanding of this conception of power

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4 A. Etzioni, "Power as Societal Force," in M.E. Olsen and M.N. Marger, eds., *Power in Modern Society* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993) 27.

5 Conquest of hegemony in cultural and ideological spheres precedes the conquest of power; see N. Bobbio, "Gramsci and the Concept of Civil Society," in J. Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives* (London: Verso, 1988) 92.

6 S. Lukes, *Power: A Radical Review* (London: Macmillan, 1974) 7.

(viewed as a duty, a service) was accentuated in the case of uncompleted social structure. The leaders related the service conception of power primarily to their own class and verbalized its interests as national ones. This attitude strengthened the radicalism of their political demands, as we could observe in the Magyar, Polish and Greek cases.

Both types of struggle for political participation—the earlier Phase B and the belated Phase C—had nevertheless one thing in common: they were not allowed to compete under equal conditions, because they were in the position of a non-dominant ethnic group. Being a numerical minority, they could never achieve decisive power positions through participation, even if they mobilized the majority of their own national group. Under the political conditions of a constitutional regime, they were allowed to publish their demands and to discuss their claims, but their position remained subordinated to the numerically stronger representation of the ruling nation.

The only way out of this frustrating situation was to seek autonomy upon the territory, defined as "national." In those cases where the national movements achieved an autonomous status, a new power mechanism began to work. The "service definition" of power weakened, and political power was related to parties and individuals.[7] Political differentiation occurred sooner or later in every national movement during its Phase C, and was accompanied by an internal struggle for political power. Still, all participants in the internal political dispute accepted one specific rule of the game as a relict of the service concept of power: the priority of national demands over all other group interests (even if their interpretation of national interests differed), from the shared conception that their nation was threatened by a common enemy—the ruling nation.

While this conception of the common enemy reflects the stereotype of national movements and became part of the emerging nationalist phraseology, it was not unfounded. Some degree of inequality remained, even under conditions of autonomy. The power of national leaders was limited to decisions taken at the national territorial level, while more important decisions were made at the level of state institutions, where the ruling nation kept its dominance. This phenomenon of domination could not be eliminated by autonomy.

A new attitude towards the ruling nation thus emerged: the search to legitimize the right to self-determination. The institutionalized power of dominate state elites was respected more as a power based on force than as a legitimate power based on authority. As long as the multi-ethnic Empire seemed to be strong enough to suppress all secessionist movements by force, most of

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7 On the emergence of "Positionalisierung der Herrschaft" see H. Popitz, *Phänomene der Macht. Autorität, Herrschaft, Gewalt, Technik* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1986) 50 f.

the leaders of national movements (even though they did not give up their struggle for political power) remained loyal to the Empire. The idea of independence was probably beyond their imagination. The exception to this rule occurred in the Ottoman Empire, where national leaders attempted to achieve immediate full independence.

The sudden collapse of multi-ethnic Empires during World War I called the latent idea of self-determination into being. Nationalist leaders could, under these changed conditions, become over night radical secessionists. Nevertheless, the role of individual decisions, based upon the protection of individual and group interests, could influence and differentiate the final outcome of this struggle.

To complete our picture, we should add that some national movements did not achieve full independence after World War I, and in some cases did not demand it: Slovenes, Slovaks, Croatians, Ukrainians, Macedonians, Belarusians. Their national movements, however, continued—even if with different intensity—and followed analogous patterns until full independence was achieved seven decades later.

Given that all national movements in Central and Eastern Europe continue to seek statehood, it would be wrong to depict them as anachronic, irrational, or antidemocratic.[8] As an object of scholarly analysis, self-determination is neither "good" nor "bad"; it has to be understood in relation to specific types of social and political claims. These result from the following model: subject B considers itself to be in subordinate position to subject A and tries to abolish this subordination. This call for self-determination is, in fact, a call "from below," and, as usual, it is uncomfortable to those "above," to men in power.

Self-determination was not "invented" by Lenin or Woodrow Wilson. Self-determination, as a historical phenomenon, is the final stage of European national development. We have to criticize and denounce nationalism as a way of thinking and as a method of struggle for "national interests" and for political power, but we have to accept the fact that current national movements, at least in some countries of Central and Eastern Europe, regard the right of self-determination as the only just solution of their problems, even if it produces new tensions and injustices.

8 See among others E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 176 f.

RESUME

Cet article décrit le concept d'autodétermination nationale comme la dernière étape de développements européens relevant de la Modernité. A ses yeux, le facteur décisif, dans ce processus, furent l'émergence, l'intensité et la pertinence sociale de l'identité nationale, plutôt que l'idéologie du nationalisme. Cet essai décrit les trois phases distinctes des mouvements nationaux, par rapport à une perspective historique comparée et se concentre sur les exigences politiques liées à l'indépendance. Il conclut en disant que les mouvements nationaux actuels en Europe centrale, et en Europe de l'est, considèrent le droit à l'autodétermination comme étant l'unique et juste solution à leurs problèmes, même si celle-ci produit de nouvelles tensions.